TRAINING CHURCH LEADERS TO ADDRESS THE PHYSICAL NEEDS OF ITS CONGREGANTS AND RESIDENTS OF THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY

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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Dayton, Ohio
May 2026

United Theological Seminary
Dayton, OH

Faculty Approval Page
Doctor of Ministry Final Project

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v

DEDICATION vii

EPIGRAPH viii

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER

1. MINISTRY FOCUS 5
2. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS 22
3. HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS 40
4. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS 63
5. INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS 83
6. PROJECT ANALYSIS 101

BIBLIOGRAPHY 131

ABSTRACT

TRAINING CHURCH LEADERS TO ADDRESS THE PHYSICAL
NEEDS OF ITS CONGREGANTS AND RESIDENTS
OF THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY

by
Carl DeHaney, Jr.
United Theological Seminary, 2025

Mentors

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The context of this project is the Emanuel Baptist Church in the Jamaica Square section of Elmont, New York. The contextual problem is that Emanuel has failed to assist the surrounding community in addressing the issues that confront it. If ministry leaders of the Emanuel Baptist Church participate in an outreach training seminar, then they will be equipped to train their members to minister to the surrounding community. This six-week study uses qualitative research methods to test the hypothesis. The results of this study will be evaluated through a series of questions pertaining to the training material.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I am incredibly grateful to God, whose grace, wisdom, mercy, and faithfulness have sustained me throughout this journey. My Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who's sacrifice for me saved my very soul. Without His guidance and strength, this work would not have been possible. Secondly, I honor my Mom and Dad, my Sister Teresina, and the vast extended family members who have been my greatest supporters during this process and continue to rally around me in all my endeavors. Certainly to my beautiful wife Kim, to my beautiful children Tre' and Kayla, I pray that you use this accomplishment to fuel your faith in that all things with God are possible. I also want to thank the numerous people of faith, the countless pastors, teachers, and organizations that allowed me to grow and develop my gifts for the benefit of the Kingdom.

To my mentors, Dr. William Curtis, Dr. Lance Watson, Sr., and my faculty consultant, Dr. Yvette Martin, for their invaluable guidance, encouragement, and unwavering support. To my cohort members and colleagues, especially Lorenzo, Dan, Ebony, and Terrance, thank you for your friendship, prayers, and insightful discussions. Your companionship on this journey has been both enriching and encouraging. We made a pact to finish together, and we did just that. We will always be family.

To my professional and contextual associates, Dr. Lisa Zekiya Newland, PhD, LCSW, Dr. Gregory K. Stanislaus, Dr. Carolyn McCummings, and Dr. William Earl Thomas, I am forever appreciative for your inspiration, skills, and proficiency. Thank you

to my contextual associates, Randy Shubin Dresner, Kennetha Pettus, for your pledge to assist me in bringing this final project to its culmination.

My editor, Dr. Lori Spears, for your patience with me, for your wisdom, insight, and constructive feedback that helped shape this project. I am immensely thankful for your coaching. I am eternally grateful for your professionalism and attention to detail.

I am also deeply appreciative of my Emanuel Baptist Church family who continually uplifted me in prayer and gave me the space to explore and implement the concepts discussed here. Your support and faith have been a constant source of encouragement. And, certainly to my Morning Pilgrim Missionary Baptist Church Family, who God has placed into my life to lead for this part of the journey.

Lastly, I am deeply grateful to all those who contributed to the completion of this project, whether through prayers, encouragement, or practical support. May this work bring glory to God and serve as a tool for equipping others in ministry.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my grandmother, the late Gwendolyn Kelly. It was my grandmother who saw ministry leadership in me when I was just a child. For the short time that I was with my grandmother, she honed those gifts of ministry leadership in me and fuel the fire of taking ministry beyond the walls of the church and to the very communities in which we live. I didn't fully understand what it was that she was doing when she was instilling those gifts in me, and enhancing those skills in me, but I'm thankful for her, I'm thankful for her spiritual wisdom, and I'm thankful for her spiritual guidance. Although you have gone on to glory many years ago , your love still resonates with me to this very day.

EPIGRAPH

"There is no separation between the gospel and culture, between how we live in society and how we live in our private lives, between the lordship of Jesus inside the four walls of a church building and outside that building."

— Michael Brown

INTRODUCTION

The context of this project is the Emanuel Baptist Church, located in the Jamaica Square section of Elmont, New York. The problem present in the context is that the Emanuel Baptist Church has failed to assist the surrounding community with addressing the issues/problems/brokenness that confronts it. If ministry leaders of the Emanuel Baptist Church participate in an outreach training seminar, then they will be equipped to train its members to minister to the surrounding community. If ministry leaders participate in a six-week outreach training seminar, then they will be equipped to train the leadership of the Emanuel Baptist Church to minister to the physical needs of its members and the surrounding community. A qualitative analysis using pre- and post-questionnaires, interviews and group discussions showed that participants recognized the need for succession planning and felt prepared to implement it.

Chapter One, Ministry Focus, centers on my own experiences as a bi-vocational associate minister/assistant pastor and local governmental official who is tied to both the congregation of my church, and residents of the surrounding community. As a bi-vocational minister, I work as a public servant in Nassau County Government, as well as in the Town of Hempstead Government in addition to being a minister of the Gospel. Working within county government has provided me with access to programs and services that are beneficial to the residents surrounding the church where I serve, as well

as congregants who may be in need. These roles are quite instrumental when it comes to addressing the spiritual and physical needs of those within my context.

Chapter Two, Biblical Foundations, provides a general overview of the second chapter of the epistle of James, the fifteenth through the seventeenth verses, as well as a detailed exegesis of the verses of this pericope on which is the biblical text on which my project has been formulated. The very crux of this pericope defines for us as people of God the very nature of loving the Lord thy God as yourself. As we continue to see rapid changes in governmental structures, community-based agencies, as well as how churches operate within our communities, there is a necessitated need for churches to fill in the gaps and spaces of functionality within the community to demonstrate the goodness of God through Jesus Christ. This pericope speaks to the very core of our Christendom with regard to how we should be exemplifying the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world at large. There is a necessitated need for churches to fill in the gaps and spaces of functionality within the community to demonstrate the goodness of God through Jesus Christ.

Chapter Three, Historical Foundations, provides a historical analysis of social gospel, how the concept of social gospel was formulated from its inception, who were the key actors in its formulation, and its impact and relevance of social gospel in American and global society through the years. Social gospel emphasized how Jesus could remedy the problems caused by “Gilded Age” capitalism, even though it was not exclusive to Protestant churches. The Social Gospel Movement leaders took Jesus' message “love thy neighbor” into pulpits, published books and lectured across the country. Other leaders,

mostly women, ran settlement houses designed to alleviate the sufferings of immigrants living in cities like Boston, New York, and Chicago. As leaders like Walter Rauschenbusch strove to articulate their theological understanding of what by the early 1910s was being called the "social gospel," they were fundamentally transforming the way many Americans were viewing the relationship between religion and social reform.

Chapter Four, Theological Foundations, looks at Liberation Theology as contextual theology (as all liberation theology speaks about a very specific context of oppression) but not all contextual theology has liberation (in terms of resistance to oppression and the production of social change) as its primary purpose. Liberation theologians (which includes anyone, trained or not, trying to 'think the faith in the face of oppression'), therefore, need to be actively engaged in the struggle for liberation, and to be doing their theology to be used as a tool for the struggle, not as an intellectual exercise in itself. This is why Liberation Theology calls for an 'option for the poor,' a statement of faith that God is on the side of all who are poor and oppressed against their oppressors. Liberation Theology draws from the core values of the Christian tradition to reinterpret an old problem in a drastically new way. The problem of poverty and marginalization has been a recurrent part of human history, and an issue that Christian leaders and theologians have repeatedly addressed since the inception of Christianity.

Chapter Five, Interdisciplinary Foundations, looks at sociology. U.S. sociology is no exception to the salience of national sociology, although it has been most guilty of claiming universality for what is a quite peculiar society. Beginning with its theological

roots in the nineteenth century, it became institutionalized with the so-called Chicago School and in other universities, such as Columbia. The task of sociology is to be engaged with the issues of democracy. Sociological research should become more actively engaged in understanding the dynamic linkage between technology, environment, populations, level of affluence, political regime characteristics, and human rights around the globe in an attempt to positively influence social change. At the personal level, sociology investigates the social causes and consequences of such things as romantic love, racial and gender identity, family conflict, deviant behavior, aging, and religious faith. At the societal level, sociology examines and explains matters like crime and law, poverty and wealth, prejudice and discrimination, schools and education, business firms, urban community, and social movements.

Chapter Six, the final chapter for this project, presents the Project Analysis, which interpreted data captured during the six-week training program with church leaders from the Emanuel Baptist Church of Elmont, New York. This chapter will include the following components: 1) the Methodology, which capsulates the tools used to capture data; 2) means of Implementation, which provides how the project was structured, demographics of participants, and expertise of presenters; 3) Summary of Learning, which provides evidence of the project bearing out the hypothesis; and 4) the Conclusion, which will be the final component, details the next steps based upon the findings of this research.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to illustrate the importance of the church addressing both the physical and spiritual needs of the congregants and residents in the surrounding communities. My ministry interests and skills relate to the needs of my contacts in various ways. My ministry focuses on meeting the spiritual and physical needs of everyone served within my context. As a bi-vocational minister, I work as a public servant in Nassau County Government as well as in the Town of Hempstead Government, alongside my role as a minister of the gospel. These roles are instrumental in addressing the spiritual and physical needs of those within my context. Working within county government has given me access to programs and services that benefit the residents near the church where I serve, along with congregation members who may be in need.

As ministers of the Gospel, and even as people of God, it's important for us to be aware of the prevalent services and programs administered by our government, as well as how to access those programs and services to benefit our people. Because God has given me the ability to navigate governmental and political structures in order to acquire whatever is needed for my context, I have been able to apply those skills to access what is necessary for our context on a daily basis. Ministry does not only involve preaching. I

learned that ministry is the action of serving God and others. Ministry is the act of going out into the world and doing what is necessary to help others; it is the way that we show our love for God and others. What I find most compelling about ministry is that it is all about loving other people. It is about putting yourself out there and taking the time, trouble, and hassle of getting involved in someone else's life. It is about being concerned about the physical and spiritual well-being of someone other than yourself. It costs me time. While it may bring pleasure and enjoyment, it may also cost me heartache and hassle.

Context

Demographic Context

The Emanuel Baptist Church of Elmont is a historical church founded on missions in the home of a founding member, located in the hamlet of Elmont, New York. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Elmont, New York, had a population of 35,265 people, with a median age of 39.4 and a median household income of $100,923. Between 2019 and 2020, the population of Elmont, New York, grew from 35,824 to 36,245, a 1.18% increase, and its median household income declined from $104,671 to $100,923, a 3.58% decrease. In 2020, there were 3.23 times more Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) residents (16,300 people) in Elmont, New York, than any other race or ethnicity. There were 5,050 White (Non-Hispanic) and 4,830 Asian (Non-Hispanic) residents, the second and third most common ethnic groups. The five largest ethnic groups in Elmont, New York, are Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) (45%),

White (Non-Hispanic) (13.9%), Asian (Non-Hispanic) (13.3%), Other (Hispanic) (11%), and White (Hispanic) (6.44%).[1]

None of the households in Elmont, New York, reported speaking a non-English language at home as their primary shared language. This does not consider the potential multilingual nature of households but only the primary self-reported language spoken by all members of the household. Elmont, New York, cites that 88% of residents are U.S. citizens. In 2020, the median property value in Elmont, New York, was $427,400, and the homeownership rate was 78.3%. Most people in Elmont, New York, drove alone to work, and the average commute time was 40.5 minutes. The average car ownership in Elmont, New York, was two cars per household. As of 2020, 45% of Elmont, New York, residents were born outside of the country (16.3k people).[2]

In 2020, South Floral Park, New York, had a population of 1,750 people, with a median age of 39.9 and a median household income of $95,563. Between 2019 and 2020, the population of South Floral Park, New York, declined from 1,999 to 1,752, a −12.4% decrease, and its median household income decreased from $98,864 to $95,563, a −3.34% decrease. 6.39% of the population for whom poverty status is determined in Elmont, New York (2,300 out of 36,000 people) live below the poverty line, a number that is lower than the national average of 12.8%.[3] The five largest ethnic groups in South Floral Park, New York, are Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) (53.8%), Asian

[1] American Community Survey Five-Year Data (2009-2023), "Census Bureau ACS Five-Year Estimate," U.S. Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html.

[2] U. S. Census Bureau, "2020 U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Hempstead Town, Nassau County, New York," U. S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov.

[3] American Community Survey Five-Year Data (2009-2023), "Census Bureau ACS Five-Year Estimate," U.S. Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html.

(Non-Hispanic) (22.1%), Other (Hispanic) (8.5%), White (Hispanic) (6.05%), and White (Non-Hispanic) (5.76%). None of the households in South Floral Park, New York, reported speaking a non-English language at home as their primary shared language.[4]

This does not consider the potential multilingual nature of households, but only the primary self-reported language spoken by all members of the household. 87.1% of the residents in South Floral Park, New York, are U.S. citizens. In 2020, the median property value in South Floral Park, New York, was $529,900, and the homeownership rate was 85.6%, which is 2.31 times larger than the national average of $229,800. Between 2019 and 2020, the median property value increased from $467,300 to $529,900, a 13.4% increase. The homeownership rate in South Floral Park, New York, is 85.6%, which is approximately the same as the national average of 64.4%. Most people in South Floral Park, New York, drove alone to work, and the average commute time was 42.2 minutes.[5]

The average car ownership in South Floral Park, New York, was two cars per household. South Floral Park, New York, is home to a population of 1,750 people, of which 87.1% are citizens. As of 2020, 43.1% of South Floral Park's residents were born outside of the country (755 people). In 2020, there were 2.43 times more Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) residents (943 people) in South Floral Park, New York, than any other race or ethnicity. The second and third most common ethnic groups comprised 388 Asian (Non-Hispanic) residents and 149 Other (Hispanic) residents, the second and third most common ethnic groups.[6] The congregation of the Emanuel Baptist

[4] U. S. Census Bureau, "2020 U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Hempstead Town, Nassau County, New York," U.S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov.

[5] U. S. Census Bureau, "2020 U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Hempstead Town, Nassau County, New York," U.S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov.

Church consists of roughly 450 to 500 members, all with strong family ties to the community of Elmont and connections to the Emanuel Baptist Church.

Historical Context

Emanuel Baptist Church began in a prayer meeting at the home of the late Mr. and Mrs. Westley Lovey, located at 28 Plainfield Ave., Elmont, New York, on June 14, 1928. The late Rev. S. M. B. Usry, pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in Hempstead, New York, along with his deacons, assisted in these services. The prayer meetings continued to grow, and in August 1928, they moved to 31 Plainfield Ave., where it became a Baptist mission. Under the supervision of the late Rev. Usry, the mission transitioned into a Baptist Church on August 23, 1931. The name selected was Emanuel Baptist Church. In 1931, the late Rev. M. G. Green became the first pastor of Emanuel Baptist Church, serving until 1936. The late Rev. Charles Cooper pastored from 1936 to 1946, followed by the late Rev. Ripley Walker from 1946 to 1951, and the late Rev. William E. Vann from 1951 to 1961. The late Rev. Dr. H. David Parker served as pastor from 1963 until 2008. When Rev. Charles E. Cooper began his pastorate, services were held in a house across the street, east of the location of the old church.[7]

The Emanuel Baptist Church sits adjacent to the famous Belmont racetrack, home of the Belmont Stakes, and the newly built UBC arena, the new home of the New York Islanders professional hockey team. Although numerous factors can help us determine

[6] Data USA, "South Floral Park, New York," Data USA, https://datausa.io/profile/geo/south-floral-park-ny.

[7] Emanuel Baptist Church, "Our History" (unpublished printed church document).

why many of our own churches are unique, the Emanuel Baptist Church has always been a remarkable place of worship in many ways, dating back to its inception. In 1921, at the Berean Baptist Church, located in Brooklyn, New York, and pastored by the Rev. Albert C. Matthews, who led Berean from 1914 to 1927, the Eastern Baptist Association of New York, Inc. was established. The Emanuel Baptist Church is a member of the Eastern Baptist Association of New York, our local district. The Eastern Baptist Association of New York comprises roughly 150 churches within Nassau, Suffolk, Kings, and Queens counties.[8]

The Emanuel Baptist Church is also part of the Empire Baptist Missionary Convention. Founded in August 1895 as "The Baptist Church Union" by a group of Black ministers, who convened at St. Phillips Baptist Church (Staten Island, New York), the organization was established to unite in fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ (Mt. 28:19-20). The Convention's name was changed to the Empire Baptist Missionary Convention of New York in 1948. The Convention headquarters building, purchased during the administration of past president Dr. Sandy F. Ray, pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church (Brooklyn, New York), is named in his honor (The Sandy Frederick Ray Building) and is located in Harlem, New York (63 – 65 West 125th Street, New York, NY 10027). The Convention's constitution and by-laws were revised on October 25, 1990, to reflect the current Convention objectives: promotion of domestic and international missions (A Home Mission Drive and A Foreign Mission Drive); Christian education; evangelism; social action; Bible study; distribution of the Bible and

[8] Eastern Baptist Association of New York, Inc., "About Us," Eastern Baptist Association of New York, Inc., https://easternbaptistassociationofny.org/about-us.

other Christian literature; and cooperation with other religious organizations. All Missionary Baptist Churches that subscribe to these objectives are welcome as members of the Empire Baptist Missionary Convention of New York. Convention membership also includes the following auxiliaries:

- The Women's Auxiliary (founded in 1901), which includes
- The Young People's Department, which was organized in 1961
- The Department of Christian Education, which was organized in 1912
- The Ministers Wives & Widows Auxiliary, which was organized in 1944
- The Laymen's Auxiliary, which was organized in 1947
- The Ushers and Nurses Auxiliary, which was organized in 1960

Membership also consists of seven regional Missionary Baptist Associations (Central Hudson, Eastern, Great Lakes, Hudson River Frontier, Northeastern, United, and Western) in New York State.

Annual Session meetings are held Monday through Friday following the third Sunday in October each year. A semi-annual session takes place on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday following the first Sunday in May each year. Officers serve a three-year term, limited to a two-term tenure of office (a maximum of six years). Elections are conducted at the Annual Session of the Convention. Delegates, who are sent by member churches, vote for the officers of the Convention and its Auxiliaries/Departments.[9] The National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., more commonly known as the National Baptist Convention (NBC USA or NBC), is a primarily African American Baptist Christian

[9] Empire Baptist Missionary Convention, "About Us," Empire Baptist Missionary Convention, https://empirebaptist.org/about.

denomination in the United States. It is headquartered at the Baptist World Center in Nashville, Tennessee, and is affiliated with the Baptist World Alliance. It is also the largest predominantly Black Christian denomination in the United States and the second largest Baptist denomination in the world.[10]

Geographical Context

The Emanuel Baptist Church is located between the hamlet of Elmont, New York, and the incorporated village of South Floral Park, New York. Both Elmont and South Floral Park are situated within the Town of Hempstead in Nassau County on Long Island, New York. The Town of Hempstead, New York, where the Emanuel Church is found, historically known as South Hempstead, is the largest of the three towns in Nassau County in the U.S. state of New York. It occupies the southwestern part of the county on the western half of Long Island, New York. Twenty-two incorporated villages are entirely or partially within the town. New York, officially the State of New York, is a state in the Northeastern United States, often referred to as New York State to differentiate it from its largest city, New York City. Nassau's county seat is Mineola, New York, while Hempstead, New York, is the largest town in the county. Nassau County is located on western Long Island, bordered by New York City's borough of Queens to the west and Long Island's Suffolk County to the east. South Floral Park was among the earliest racially integrated villages on Long Island. With a total area of 54,556 square miles (141,300 km2), New York is the 27th-largest U.S. state by area.

[10] Frank A. Thomas, *Introduction to the Practice of African American Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2016).

With 20.2 million people, it is the fourth most populous state in the United States as of 2021, with approximately 44% living in New York City, including 25% of the state's population in Brooklyn and Queens, and another 15% on the rest of Long Island, New York, the most populous island in the United States. Nassau County is an affluent inner suburban county located on Long Island, New York, immediately east of New York City. As of the 2020 United States Census, Nassau County's population was 1,395,774, reflecting an increase of 56,242 (+4.2%) from the 1,339,532 residents counted in the 2010 U.S. Census. Nassau's county seat is Mineola, New York, while the county's largest town is Hempstead, New York.

Nassau County is situated on western Long Island, New York, bordering New York City's borough of Queens to its west, and Long Island's Suffolk County to its east. It is the most densely populated and second-most populous county in the State of New York outside of New York City, with which it maintains extensive rail and highway connectivity, and is considered one of the central counties within the New York metropolitan area. Nassau County contains two cities, three towns, sixty-four incorporated villages, and more than sixty unincorporated hamlets. Nassau County has a designated police department, fire commission, and elected executive and legislative bodies.[11]

[11] U. S. Census Bureau, "2019 U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Hempstead Town, Nassau County, New York," U. S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov.

Ministry Journey

I received my call to the ministry early in my teens, but due to a lack of spiritual and personal maturity, I spent much of my late teens and early to mid-twenties running from my calling. I wasted a lot of time trying to fit in with people with whom I would probably never belong, going to places where I had no business being and doing things I should not have done. I dabbled in street life, and only by the grace of God did I see the inside of a jail cell twice, with both charges completely dismissed. As I grew older, I attempted to fill the void of my call to ministry with politics, community advocacy, and even church work, all while trying to evade the call I had received years earlier. God placed me on my bed of affliction a couple of times, and I asked Him questions about my situation to which I already knew the answers.

I eventually became a deacon in the Baptist church under the leadership of my pastor at the time, the Rev. Dr. William A. Watson, Jr. I have led in my district church association and my state convention, but none of those experiences ever really filled the void of the call. I have also served as Chairman of the Deacon Board at St. John's Baptist Church. Eventually, I grew tired of running and acknowledged the call to preach the word of God that has been in my heart and has been calling me for years. I was eventually licensed to preach at Emanuel Baptist Church of Elmont on January 13th, 2019, which is my birthday.

Currently, I serve as an associate minister at the Emanuel Baptist Church of Elmont, New York, where my pastor is the Rev. Ralph P. Taylor. I have also served as the President of the Laymen Auxiliary for the Eastern Baptist Association of New York, Inc., where the Moderator is the Rev. Gilbert Pickett, Sr., and I have additionally served

as vice president at large for the Empire Baptist Missionary Convention of New York, where the Convention president is the Rev. Dr. Carl Washington, Jr. My role as a minister of the Gospel at the Emanuel Baptist Church of Elmont, New York, is carried out explicitly as a representative of Christ with and for other believers. In my position as an associate minister, I have been entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the Christian Education program, which includes Sunday School classes for all age groups at the church. It is important for me to state that I am not a full-time minister; rather, I am a bi-vocational minister. During the day, I work for the Nassau County Department of Human Services, where I serve as public information officer for the department. I also served as assistant commissioner for the Nassau County Department of Social Services, where I assisted in overseeing a nearly $1 billion budget consisting of various programs and services for the residents of Nassau County.

I have also served as a commissioner of Sanitary District #2 in the Town of Hempstead, New York. I believe God has played a huge part in my career as a public servant. Being a public servant and working in local government has allowed me to be a blessing not only to the residents of Nassau County but also to the congregants of Emanuel Baptist Church, to some members of the Eastern Baptist Association of New York, and to members of the Empire Baptist Missionary Convention of New York. Not a day goes by without someone inquiring about how to access various programs and services available to them through Nassau County; not a day passes without me assisting someone with their case file or connecting them with their caseworker for family programs and services. For a short period, I did not recognize what God had allowed me to do as a public servant as ministry, but the truth is that my role as a public servant is

fundamentally about ministry. I see my vocational experiences as important as preaching a sermon on Sunday morning. Being a bi-vocational minister has given me access to various resources such as food pantries and even to the offices of local elected officials to benefit various congregations, including Emanuel.

Being a steward of the Food Distribution Program at the church, where we feed hundreds of families who are both church and community members bi-weekly, has been a blessing. Additionally, part of my Ministry Context includes assisting my pastor in ensuring a smooth worship experience by overseeing the sound ministry and making sure that all pertinent announcements and information are in the pastor's hands when he steps into the pulpit. Finally, as an Associate Minister, part of my Ministry Context is being prepared to preach every Sunday, whether or not I am called to do so. Reflecting on this spiritual journey, I believe that my calling is to pastor God's people. I believe that God has equipped me with everything I need to lead His people, based on the experiences He has allowed me to have and the challenges I have faced in my life.

When I consider everything that has taken place in my life, all those experiences have shaped and molded me to lead God's people in the way that He would have me to lead them. I believe that God has given me the gift to speak to both the spiritual and physical needs of His people. Being bi-vocational and working in local government has provided me access to resources that I have always seen fit to bring back to the church. I am a big believer in meeting the needs of God's people based on James chapter two, which says:

> What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it

> profit? Thus, also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works (Jas. 2:14-18).

I am also a big believer in standing up for God's people, especially in these end times. Isaiah chapter one, verse seventeen says, "learn to do good, seek justice, rebuke the oppressor, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow." My calling has been discerned in many ways, but more recently, it has been confirmed by my being a finalist to pastor a church near me. Although I was not voted in by the people of that church, God gave me confirmation that pastoring is what I am supposed to be doing for the rest of my days. It has also been recognized by many of my family members and those who are around me on a daily basis. Those who have known me since I was a young boy have discerned that the call to pastor has been on my life from a very early age. My mother often talks about how I had such a love for God and for the word of God from a very early age. She also mentioned how I loved the things of God and prayed for God's people from an early age as well. I'm excited about where God is leading me in these last days. I know that God is faithful, and I'm enthusiastic about the vision that He's given me to lead God's people and be a blessing to the communities we serve. I understand that if God gives a vision, He will also provide for that vision; He'll meet all of our ministry needs to further His kingdom.

Conclusion

Prior to the pandemic, community pillars and establishments such as the Public Library, the local high school, and, of course, the local church have taken on different roles within the context of the community. Particularly with the church, it seems that

communities surrounding local churches expect much more from them regarding their everyday needs. With these changes in the community and how churches are viewed, the church has assumed a broader role within these areas. The question that arises from this line of thought is: what role does the church actually play in today's community? In seeking to answer that question, we first discover that this approach of the church taking on more of a community structure is not new. Many of us believe that both the church and the family are at a crossroads. It appears we have arrived at a potentially defining moment in society, where the church is losing its influence and the home is losing its heart. Some say it's time to give up on the church, or at least abandon the idea that the church, in the form of an organized institution, can have any lasting effect on the next generation.

Others suggest it is time to give up on the home. It is logical to assume that since the family unit continues to disintegrate and parents fail in their responsibilities, it's time to replace the home with a more effective model. Some churches embrace the idea that the church needs to become a substitute for the family, while others endorse a movement that encourages the home to become a substitute for the church. As a result, church and home represent a polarization of ideas instead of a convergence.[12] We need to prepare people not only to be Christian believers but also Christian practitioners: people who practice their faith each day of their lives in ways that change the world around them. Education should always be connected to some form of concrete action. Education and awareness on an issue should lead to but not replace doing justice. We reflect critically on

[12] Ronald MacLeod, "The Church as a Community Centre," *The Public Health Journal* 16, no. 10 (1925): 481–486, JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41973378.

social concerns in light of our Christian faith so we can take action to make a difference. Education, when done well, results in positive change.

Many people have written off the church because they have not yet heard the whole message of God. What they know about the church has been shaped by the warped portrayals they see constantly in the media. Many have not yet heard that God passionately loves the world, and that we as God's people are called to be faithful stewards of all creation. Many have not yet heard that Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace, and that we are called to be peacemakers, ministers of reconciliation in a world addicted to violence. Many have not yet heard that we as God's people are called to love all of God's creation, inviting and welcoming every person in grace and love to worship and serve God.[13]

As the Church, part of our effort to build relationships and trust by loving our neighbors and fostering community must be grounded in our willingness to exemplify Jesus Christ—not only by meeting the spiritual needs of the community but also by addressing some of its physical and social needs. One of the greatest mistakes of the church is expecting the surrounding community to come to us rather than us, as the church, reaching out to the community. The Church of Christ began as a Community Center. It was a gathering or a Society of adults and children who believed in the ideals, leadership, and salvation of Jesus Christ. Its center of attraction and inspiration was the memory and spiritual presence of one who made love supreme in every human relationship and regarded little children as heirs and exponents of his Kingdom. The

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[13] Board of Church and Society, *Guidelines Church and Society: Advocate and Witness for Peace and Justice* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2016), ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=4530759.

church was the only Community Center where differences of race, language, and government were fused into a new loyalty to a spiritual presence and a new brotherhood, which transcended all barriers of class, color, and creed. It was in such community centers that the kingdom of God on earth first found visible expression.[14]

In order for the church-centered community to return to its origins, we need to revisit the mission of the church: why the church does what it does. It is important for the church to become a Christ-centered, Spirit-filled community that seeks to improve the lives of those both within and around it. The people of God, especially those in the church, must not focus solely on who becomes a member as a result of our beneficial actions; instead, we should concentrate on being as Christlike as possible while striving to build a better community on behalf of the God we serve. Before we can establish a Christ-centered community center, it is essential to revisit our mission as a church and as the people of God.

This mission reminds us that our faith is about more than ourselves; there is a greater purpose to our discipleship—the transformation of a troubled, broken world. The Jewish faith has a name for this "mending or healing of creation," Tikkun Olam. We see the same image in the Lord's Prayer as we pray, "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven." God is calling the church to join in the work of renewing creation. This is the ministry of Church and Society. It is through this renewal of creation and this ministry of church and society that the restructuring and rebuilding of Christ-centered and church-centered communities must be reborn. We can certainly reflect on a time in history,

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[14] Reggie Joiner, *Think Orange: Imagine the Impact When Church and Family Collide* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009), ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.dtl.idm.oclc.org/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=4462907.

particularly within Black communities across the nation, where the church was the center of the community both spiritually and physically. When you visit some communities even here in the United States, you see the original footprints of community design, where homes were built around the church because, from the outset of the planning and building of many of our communities, there was always the idea that the church would be in the center of our lives, at the heart of all the hopes and dreams for what our community should be. However, one of the questions that comes to mind is how this pertains to the Black community.

From running community programs to hosting civil rights meetings, many predominantly Black churches have long been deeply involved in their communities. However, 41% of Black adults say these churches have "too little influence" in Black communities today, while far fewer (10%) say they have "too much influence." Many (45%) say they have "about the right amount of influence."[15] Ministry has always been about the betterment, the uplifting, and the physical edification of the world through Jesus Christ. My spiritual journey and everything that I have experienced throughout my life have led me right up to the place where I am now as a bi-vocational minister who works in local government. Because of my work in local government, God has given me access to services and programs that can benefit those within the church congregation and those in the surrounding communities around the church. These programs and services should be modeled, distributed, and allocated through the church, as it becomes a more central entity within our communities.

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[14] Pew Research Center, "Faith Among Black Americans," Pew Research Center, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/02/16/faith-among-black-americans/.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this doctoral project is to highlight the importance of the Church of God taking an active and more prevalent role in their surrounding communities, particularly in the areas where they reside. As modern local governments find themselves depleted and short on resources, and stifled in their ability to distribute and allocate the resources they have, this presents a tremendous opportunity for the Church to minister to those in the surrounding communities. Over the past two decades, the community infrastructure has drastically changed, and we have seen many community-based agencies and entities adopt the role of resource providers to assist individuals who may have difficulty receiving direct services from local government. This project will demonstrate the significance of why the Church, as a Christ-filled spiritual entity exemplifying the teachings of Jesus Christ, should not only serve the spiritual "man" but should also be serving the physical man.

This Biblical Foundations Chapter is organized to provide a general overview of the second chapter of the epistle of James, the fourteenth through the seventeenth verses, as well as a detailed exegesis of the verses of this pericope which is the biblical text my project has been formulated.

> What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, parentheses depart in peace, be warmed and filmed filled parentheses, but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (Jam. 2:14-17).

The very crux of this pericope defines for us as people of God the very nature of loving the Lord thy God as yourself. It speaks to the very core of our Christendom regarding how we should be exemplifying the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world at large. This chapter has been organized and structured to provide a detailed exegesis of each of the three verses, while simultaneously highlighting the importance of describing the carrying out of works correlated with our faith.

As we continue to witness rapid changes in governmental structures, community-based agencies, and the way churches operate within our communities, there is a pressing need for churches to address gaps in functionality within the community to demonstrate the goodness of God through Jesus Christ. While people can receive uplifting messages within the walls of the church, they also need to see the gospel in action. The best sermons are lived, not preached.

Exegesis

On the one hand, nothing in James' discussion about the relationship of faith to works represents a significant innovation relative to Jesus' teachings. James's point is simply that Jews ought to live out their Jewish faith in appropriate works, with Jesus, faith functioning for James as the ideal Jewish faith and Jesus, ethical teaching, as the required works. The discourse is entirely continuous with the opening of the letter, and it

is still about how you should navigate the time of testing that precedes final judgment. Its message is still that they should navigate by obeying the commands of God.[1]

The author of James accuses the audience of "dishonoring the poor man" if they demonstrate partiality to the rich (Jas. 2:6), but it is the rich, depicted in part as effeminate degenerates, who are dishonorable in James.[2] First, God has a particular concern for the poor, the downtrodden, the outcasts. God is "a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows" (Ps. 68:5); "he defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing" (Dt. 10:18). So also, James claims that "God has chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith" (2:5). Second, God's people must imitate God by showing a similar concern for the poor and disadvantaged. The Deuteronomy passage, quoted above, continues, "And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt" (v. 19). The prophets regularly denounce Israel for failing to obey this aspect of God's law (see, e.g., Am. 2:6-7).

James likewise makes the care of orphans and widows one of the key elements of pure and faultless religion (1:27).[3] James' well-known insistence that believers not just hear but do the word of God (1:22) and his demand for a "faith that works" (2:14-26) reflect the same concern. Obedience to the "law of liberty" must be heartfelt and

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[1] James D. Dvorak and Zachary K. Dawson, eds., *The Epistle of James: Linguistic Exegesis of an Early Christian Letter* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019), 97.

[2] Eric Farrel Mason and Darian R. Lockett, eds., "Reading the Epistle of James: A Resource for Students," *Resources for Biblical Study* 94 (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2019), 167, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvrxk2n5.16.

[3] Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James (The Pillar New Testament Commentary)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021), 28, www.eerdmans.com.

consistent. God's law focuses on love for the neighbor (2:8). Therefore, "pure and undefiled religion" will manifest itself in loving concern for the helpless in society (1:27), in a meek and unselfish attitude toward others (3:13-18). It will renounce discrimination (2:1-13) and not speak evil of others (4:11-12). The passage opens with a direct address to the readers ("my brothers"), raising the question of the efficacy of a faith unaccompanied by deeds. As he did in 2:2-4, James begins his response with an illustration involving poverty (v. 15-16) followed by a concluding observation (v. 17). The question "What is the good of it?" frames verses fourteen through sixteen (Jas. 2).

As the example of verses fifteen through sixteen reveals believers' treatment of poor people is still very much in James' mind. The call for faith that leads to deeds echoes the idea of verse one and gives further basis for the warning against favoritism. Some commentators, indeed, emphasize this dimension of the paragraph to the extent that they make it the primary theme; David's, for instance, titles this section "Generosity Is Necessary." But doing so unfairly diminishes the third, and broadest, connection that 2:14-26 has to the argument of the letter. For this paragraph is the capstone on James's presentation of "true religion," begun in 1:21. Obedience to the word, James has insisted, is a necessary mark of authentic Christianity. Taken by itself, however, such an emphasis could lead to an externalist interpretation of Christianity, as if all that mattered was outward conformity to the demands of scripture. So, 2:14-26 adds a necessary corrective: "true religion" begins with faith—but a faith that works. In this sense, the "true religion" of 1:26 is nothing more than the genuine faith of 2:14-26, and the faith versus works

antithesis of this paragraph corresponds almost exactly to the “hearing the word”/“doing the word” antithesis of 1:22.38.[4]

> The God of the Letter of James is, on the one hand, a merciful and gracious God, and, on the other, he is the Lawgiver and the Judge, as Mußner emphasized. According to Mußner, the last two predicate from above are strongly directed against the rich people (5,1-6) who are non-socially minded and who are addicted to the unconscious enjoyment of life, as well as against putative faith [...] and against any kind of unkindness towards neighbor (Unity and Dialogue: Journal for Ecumenical Theology and Interreligious Dialogue, 2020). Mußner also emphasized that the God of the Epistle of James above all is a God of nearness (4,7) who hears prayers (1,5; 5,15-17) and in whose hands lies the future life of every being on earth (4,15), but whose main criterion for his future judgement is love (Unity and Dialogue: Journal for Ecumenical Theology and Interreligious Dialogue, 2020).[5]

In the end, Mußner concluded Thus, according to the Letter of James, God is primarily the Lord, the Father, the Judge, and thus the living God, who is not ‘beyond’ his work, but rather ‘involved’ in it in a vivid way. This distinct image of God corresponds to the image of God of the prophets and Jesus.[6]

A second fundamental component of the concept of faith in James is its fulfillment through the deeds of love or through helping the poor (Jas. 1,21- 27; 2,14-26), something that is not at all different from the Old Testament and Jewish practice of faith, Mußner stressed.[7] The above-mentioned trust in God, who hears and helps people just like the »self-evident ‘demonstration’ and realization of faith due to the works of love« is

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[4] Moo, *The Letter of James*, 75.

[5] Marko Jovanović, “Franz Mußner’s Interpretation of the Epistle of James and Its Impact on Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” *Unity and Dialogue* 75, no. 2 (2020): 119–39, doi:10.34291/Edinost/75/02/Jovanovic.

[6] University of Ljubljana, “Unity and Dialogue,” *Unity and Dialogue: Journal for Ecumenical Theology and Interreligious Dialogue*, https://www.teof.uni-lj.si/publications/unity-and-dialogue.

[7] Marko Jovanović, “Franz Mußner’s Interpretation of the Epistle of James and Its Impact on Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” *Unity and Dialogue* 75, no. 2 (2020): 119–39, doi:10.34291/Edinost/75/02/Jovanovic.

»the best legacy [of the Old Testament and Judaism] and spirit of the Jesus' Spirit, who demands trust in the power of God as well as in his power (Mk. 2:5, 5:34-36, 9:23, 10:52, 11:22-24) and who rejects the people, who are saying "Lord, Lord" (Mt. 7:21). The author of the Letter of James passionately stands up for this group of the poor and warns the rich to be helpful to the poor, which the prophets of Israel have also done. The relationship between the rich and the poor, and their relationship to God is not only discussed by the prophets but also in other Old Testament and Jewish scriptures, in which other (sociological) dimensions of this topic are likewise visible.

For James and Jesus, the poor are the inheritors of the Kingdom of God. Both are throwing their "woe" towards the rich. Both of them are warning against the greedy desires of the rich. Both are thinking in the scheme of lowering—exalting of the poor. Both are demanding concrete help for the needy neighbor and promote a "non-limited" understanding of the term "neighbor."[8] James does not explicitly address itself to Christians. The first line has this "James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings" (Jas. 1:1). There is nothing here about a church or churches. James quite literally addresses itself to "the twelve tribes in the Dispersion." Many believe that this is a figurative way of speaking about Christianity throughout the world.[9]

The primary design of the Epistle was to encourage holy living amid the peculiar temptations and trials to which the Jewish Christians were exposed. Hence, whatever

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[8] Marko Jovanović, "Franz Mußner's Interpretation of the Epistle of James and Its Impact on Jewish-Christian Dialogue," *Unity and Dialogue* 75, no. 2 (2020): 119–39, doi:10.34291/Edinost/75/02/Jovanovic.

[9] Dale C. Allison, "The Jewish Setting of the Epistle of James," *Luce Verbi* 49, no. 1 (2015): 9, doi:10.4102/ids.v49i1.1897.

considerations were calculated to produce patient steadfastness, unworldliness, and mutual serviceableness were earnestly insisted upon; those offences which disturbed the purity and peace of the churches were sternly reprobated; and, in particular, the abuse of the doctrines of Divine Sovereignty as related to sin, and of salvation by faith, was emphatically condemned. On the other hand, the oppressors of Christians were denounced for their injustice and were threatened with speedy retribution. The homiletical character of the Epistle allowed for such changes of address. The letter was sent to the care of no special church or group of churches. It is a catholic, or general. Epistle was intended to be multiplied and circulated as widely as possible, so that it might correct improprieties in the growing and poorly-supplied churches, and instruct the minds and consciences of individual believers.[10]

We are dealing with a servant of Jesus Christ concerned with the poor and oppressed people of his times, people who were undergoing unbearable suffering and needed strength and hope. James offered them a word of encouragement and advice. Because of the controversial nature of the letter and the uncertainty concerning the author, date, and place of origin, we will leave this debate and turn to the text in the light of our context. The author is a man named James, who calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ. He could embody all the James we know, the son of the carpenter, brother of the Lord, and great leader of the church of Jerusalem. He could also be the son of the fisherman, a teacher (3:1), or any other. He is a person concerned about the well-being of the oppressed Christian communities and about the poor in general. What matters is not

[10] Edwin T. Winkler, *Commentary on the Epistle of James* (Philadelphia, PA: American Baptist Publication Society, 1888), https://library.biblioboard.com/content/addbc6c6-445f-410f-bed3-d6cfcbd31678.

so much the true identity of this man, but rather his message for us today.[11] James continues his argument against showing partiality by expanding the topic to a broader discussion on faith and works. He presents the propositio in verse fourteen as an elaboration of the theme from 1:22—be doers of the word and not hearers only—by considering relationships to rich/poor (1:27-2:16) and obedience to the law of liberty (2:12).

The propositio is framed as two rhetorical questions that fully expect a negative answer, especially considering the judgment mentioned in the conplexio of 2:12: "So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty" (Jas. 2:12). James's proposition for this sub-unit reconfigures his theme in a way that sets up this new elaboration: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?" (Jas. 2:14). Stated simply, the propositio is faith without works does not save.[12] James calls his intended audience "brothers and sisters" (2:1) and "beloved brothers and sisters" (2:5), apt terms because James is concerned about people in the community treating each other as beloved family members. These addresses suggest a close relationship but also serve to introduce some rather harsh observations, rebukes, and instructions for changing their behavior. The recipients' works, in this instance showing favoritism to certain people, are not living up to their professed faith in the "glorious Lord Jesus Christ" (2:1). The importance of issues

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[11] Elsa Tamez, *Scandalous Message of James* (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2018), 23, http://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/product/openreader?id=none&isbn=9780824550332.

[12] Timothy Jay Black, "Fighting Poverty as an Imperative for Mission: A Discourse with the Evangelical Movement in the Light of James Chapter 2" (PhD diss., University of Pretoria, South Africa, 2017).

concerning the rich and poor—specifically the oppression of the poor by the wealthy—is underscored by these verses and by the number of times James returns to this theme.[13] James' concern is about caring for orphans and widows, enduring suffering patiently, being poor, and being approved by God as righteous. In whatever circumstances the author of James was living, it was well beyond the time and situation of both the historical figures of James and Paul. It is instructive to observe the rhetorical turns in James's argumentation. His case reads like the work of an attorney cross-examining witnesses in a court trial without giving them a chance to explain themselves. First, he questions people in the assembly who put a high premium on faith. "Can faith save you?" (2:14b). And then he illustrates in such a way that the witness would appear foolish if they were to answer the rhetorical question in the affirmative. If a member of the assembly needs food and clothing and you send them on their way with a greeting of peace and good will based on faith alone, "what is the good of that?" (2:16b). The drawn conclusion is "faith by itself, if it has not works, is dead" (2:17). Next witness. This one operates on the principle of faith but respects others who practice works, thus affirming each position as equally efficacious in itself for justification. Sorry, not acceptable. "Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith" (2:18).[14] What makes Mongstad-Kvammen's analysis different from other studies is her specific argument that the rich man in James chapter two is an equestrian based upon his gold rings, toga candida (the Greek term for this garment is used in James 2:2), and the

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[13] David Gowler, "James Through the Centuries," in *Blackwell Bible Commentaries* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=1420225.

[14] V. George. Shillington, *James and Paul: The Politics of Identity at the Turn of the Ages* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 90, https://www-jstor-org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/stable/j.ctt12878bh.8.

presumption that he will get the best seat in what she deem to be a worship service. This claim has implications for how we understand early Christian assemblies within the context of the Roman imperial system of rank. The issue in James, she thinks, is not primarily that of rich versus poor, but the effects of differences in rank upon the Christian community.[15]

In James, three groups find encouragement the desperately poor (the πτωχός): shamed in the assembly (2:1–4) and ignored in their need (2:14–16); the oppressed, hauled to court (2:6) or wages withheld (5:3–4); and the humble (the ταπεινός), who recognize their place before God and are consistently promised that they will be raised from their place of humiliation (1:9; 4:6–7). Each of these groups finds in the text that they are on the side of right (2:5).[16] James now follows Jesus' teaching further. It is not enough that we show no partiality. That is, after all, a negative conception. Implicit in these verses (and hinted at already in verse 8) is a more inclusive idea that the author expresses in the phrase "Mercy triumphs over justice," and which bursts onto the center of the stage in verses fourteen through twenty-six. James begins by asking in verse fourteen, what good is faith apart from works? Here, we must understand what he means by works. Against the background of verse eight, he explains in verses fifteen and sixteen what he has in mind. Works are giving to a brother or sister what they need. It is, in a word, the gift of hospitality, an open giving of yourself and your goods to the needy. Notice that these expressions of love are not, strictly speaking, demanded by the law.

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[15] Alicia J. Batten, "Book Review: Toward a Postcolonial Reading of the Epistle of James: James 2:1–13 in Its Roman Imperial Context," *Biblical Theology Bulletin: Journal of Bible and Culture* 46, no. 3 (2016): 159–160, doi:10.1177/0146107916655294e.

[16] Daniel K. Eng, "Reading the Epistle of James: A Resource for Students," *The Expository Times* 131, no. 11 (2020): 518–18, doi:10.1177/0014524620934080.

They are expressions of doing mercy that go above and beyond the demands of the law—the second mile of the Sermon on the Mount—but that, by that fact, reflect the character of God. This is how mercy triumphs, not just in showing impartiality but in loving hospitality and welcome for those in need.[17] Next, James points to the lack of works in this man's faith and asks, "Is that faith able to save him?" expecting a negative answer. This does not mean that James is promoting works to or as a condition for the salvation in question; he does not ask, "Is this lack/abundance of works able to save him?" He focuses still on the faith in question and makes it the determinant of the salvation he has in mind. The faith is the ultimate test of this salvation. However, it must not be ignored that he also makes the lack of work the reason for the doubtfulness of the man's profession of faith. Works appear to be the test of the faith James has in mind as the type of faith that will save. James says plainly that the man who is claiming faith but not doing work does not have faith that can save. When reading of the judgment that James speaks of in Chapter Two, the observer cannot help but think of Matthew 25:31ff, where Jesus speaks of His separating the sheep and the goats according to their works. Here deeds are the basis for inclusion or exclusion concerning the kingdom. [18]

James argues throughout his letter that the Christian faith should express itself through charitable acts of hospitality. True religion, says James, consists of ministering to the needs of the disenfranchised and impoverished members of society, while refusing to

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[17] William Dyrness, "Mercy Triumphs Over Justice: James 2:13 and the Theology of Faith and Works," *Themelios* 6, no. 3 (April 1981): 11-16.

[18] Gale Z. Heide, "The Soteriology of James, 2:14," *Grace Theological Journal* 12, no. 1 (1992): 69-97.

allow 'the world's' hypocrisies and false doctrines to corrupt one's life (Jas. 1:27).[19] For James, the Christian lifestyle should aim at ameliorating social pain and marginality, to be holy is to be hospitable, to be pious is to be pragmatic. James' thesis is that since an uncaring and inactive religion is not efficacious, those who wish to be a part of the believing community must practice acts of kindness and charity. Nowhere in the letter does James make this point more emphatically than in James 2:14-26. Thus, the intent of James 2:14-26 is to establish the nature of the one true faith. Within these verses, James argues against a dead orthodoxy, against a self-satisfied attitude that would presume upon divine grace, against an intellectual profession that carries with it no ethical compulsion.

Whereas James argues in 2:1-13 that a church that shows favoritism fails to practice "pure and undefiled religion," his purpose in verses fourteen through twenty-six is to demonstrate why a church that looks after the physical needs of its members satisfies God's requirements for thteskeia kathara kai amiantos. Unlike a church that would pride itself on doctrine alone, the community that provides for the physical requirements of its members in addition to teaching the principles of the Orthodox faith will escape God's judgment. James 2:14-26 thus constitutes the climax of James' plea for a "pure religion" that vindicates itself in action.[20] The illustration in verses fifteen through sixteen brings James's concern into focus. He describes a situation in which a member of the community who is poorly dressed and hungry comes into the assembly only to be dismissed with the words, "Go home in peace! Keep warm and be satisfied!" (v. 16b). It is not so much what

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[19] "The Aktionsart of the Verb in the Epistle of James," (PhD diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Texas, 1959), 79.

[20] David Edgar, *Has God Not Chosen the Poor?: The Social Setting of the Epistle of James* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2001), ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=742705.

the token Christian (‘one of you’) says to the needy persons that concern James, but what he or she fails to do on their behalf. There is nothing intrinsically offensive or harsh about the statement. Indeed, it expresses a genuine desire for the prolonged health of the individuals in question. However, the circumstances under which the community member makes the statement reveal it as calloused and insensitive.

Confronted with a need among his brothers and sisters, this “believer” does nothing but express his good wishes. The irony of the situation is clear; the health wish of verse sixteen (b), though sincere, is completely inadequate since this is precisely what the needy persons are unable to do without help from someone else. The people described in James 2:15 need more than a wish from the church. They need an action that will provide them with adequate clothing and sufficient food. The point of James's illustration is obvious as long as the church fails to provide the needy with the ‘necessary things,’ nothing good has been done.[21] In verse fifteen, a brother or sister, thus a member of the same group to which the author sees both himself and the addressees belonging, is depicted in destitute circumstances. Yujuvoi imdpxcoaiv depicts a much more dramatic lack of clothing than ‘ill-clad,’ literally, it means naked. Not only does the brother or sister lack adequate (or virtually any) clothing, but she or he also lacks daily food.. The response, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” does not indicate outright hostility, but, as the following line shows, it does show a failure to supply much-needed material support, for which the marginal itinerants were radically dependent on God, and which in

[21] L. Schottroff, “Itinerant Prophetesses: A Feminist Analysis of the Sayings Source Q,” R.A. Piper, ed., in *The Gospel Behind the Gospels: Current Studies on Q* (Leiden, UK: E.J. Brill, 1995), 347-360.

practical terms was met by local groups who also responded favorably to the proclamation of Jesus.[22]

The brother or sister depicted in these verses fits the social description of the socially marginal poor. Moreover, if there were grounds to suppose that the term 7CTCG%6<; (TCG KOGJUCO) in 2:2 and 2:5 refers to the itinerant radicals of the Jesus movement, there are also indications in 2:15-16 that such a link is plausible. From our angle of praxis, we see that James wanted to emphasize the unity between faith and works as part of the necessary consistency in believing, hearing, saying, and doing.[23] A singular feature of James is his emphasis on good works (1:22– 27, 2:14– 26).[24] From beginning to end, James has his eye on the abuse of the poor, the injustices of the rich, the pride of the merchants, and the need to show mercy to those in need.[25]

Inasmuch as blatant nudity was shameful in the Jewish world (e.g., Rv. 16:15; 17:16), this expression is merely a graphic image of the inadequacy of clothing, or it refers to being poorly dressed (Mt. 25:36, 38, 43–44) or incompletely dressed (Jn. 21:7). Nakedness is an image of shame and defenselessness. The need for food ("lacks daily food") focuses on the basics—"daily." This brother or sister does not have even a daily allotment (Acts 6:1; 1 Tm. 5:3– 20). The "good" in "What good is it?" is ophelos, which

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[22] Elsa Tamez, et al, *The Scandalous Message of James: Faith Without Works Is Dead* (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 2002), Chapter 2.

[23] Elsa Tamez, et al, *The Scandalous Message of James: Faith Without Works Is Dead* (New York, NY: Herder and Herder, 2002), Chapter 2.

[24] Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=4860069.

[25] Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=4860069.

could also mean "benefit," but the more important observation is that it draws its meaning from its context. That is, it draws on the word "save" in the last part of verse fourteen to clarify what kind of "good" is involved. Thus, the "good" or "benefit" in James's question is salvation or saving benefits for the messianic community. "What good is it?" assumes the content of the conditional construction "if you say." James challenges throughout this letter the assumption, or the claim, of faith that is not accompanied by works (1:22–27), and many other places in the New Testament show that faith must become manifest in love and obedience (Lk. 3:7– 14; Mt. 7:15– 27; Rom. 1:5, 2:6–8 6:17–18; 1 Cor. 13:2; 2 Cor. 10:5–6; Gal. 6:4–6; Heb. 5:11–6:8; 1 Jn. 1:6).

The neediness of the "brother and sister," family terms for the messianic community, is clothing and food. The need for clothing comes to expression with a graphic image "if a brother or sister is naked." Inasmuch as blatant nudity was shameful in the Jewish world (e.g., Rv. 16:15, 17:16), this expression is merely a graphic image of the inadequacy of clothing, or it refers to being poorly dressed (Mt. 25:36, 38, 43–44) or incompletely dressed (Jn. 21:7). Nakedness is an image of shame and defenselessness. The need for food ("lacks daily food") focuses on the basics—"daily," destined for 'death' instead of 'life' at day's end (cf. 5:19–20)." We must also respect what James is saying, some claim faith, who are connected to the community of faith, who confess an orthodox faith, and who may well be supporters of the faith, but who do not have works—and their faith cannot save.[26] James now draws his conclusion in 2:17, and it is the conclusion that has quietly lurked behind everything James has said from the

[26] Scot McKnight, *The Letter of James* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=4860069.

beginning of this paragraph: "So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (Jas. 2:17). This conclusion is clearer than the implicit answer of 2:14 and is spoken of in four ways: faith without works is useless (2:14), cannot save (2:14), is dead (2:17), and is ineffective (2:20).[27]

Summary

The study of this passage in the epistle of James is foundational to this doctoral project because it speaks to the very essence of how today's church should be ministering to the community at large; it speaks to faith in action, and how people of God should be representing Christ for the world to see. This pericope argues that the way a person acts—their "works"—is a sign of the type of "faith" they possess. So-called "faith" that does not lead a person to engage in good works is not saving faith; it is a dead thing. One of the major arguments in opposition to the church today is that it is obsolete, and antiquated, in its approach of scriptural application to everyday life. More and more children are growing up in broken homes, unemployment is on the rise and Christians are sinking deeper into debt like never before. Many churchgoers are struggling to make ends meet in their everyday lives, and we feel the pinch of reality just like everyone else. Believers are not exempt from trials of the world. We are living in perilous and drastic times. Drastic times call for drastic measures.[28]

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[27] P. J. Hartin, *James of Jerusalem: Heir to Jesus of Nazareth.* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 137.

[28] Daniel L. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2001), 191.

It is useless and meaningless to believe or that a person in poverty is doing well if this belief does not lead to action. Likewise, James emphasizes that it is not enough to mentally agree on certain facts about God. If what a person believes about God does not cause them to act on it, then their "faith" is not a saving faith. For Jesus' disciples today, it would seem that where love for neighbor is absent, love for God is nonexistent. Love for God and love for others are interrelated.

It is not possible to love God without loving his children, nor is it possible to love God's children and not love God, and that is the challenge to today's church at large; there is a need for today's church to put faith into action, and the entire world is watching. What is interesting about James' letter is that he never says that faith is not necessary for salvation. He never claims that works are necessary to obtain or maintain salvation. However, he clearly understands that truly saving faith cannot be separated from the evidence of good works.

What is needed - it will be said - is not evangelistic preaching but action by Christians along with all people of goodwill to tackle the terrible problems of the nation, to free the oppressed, heal the sick, and bring hope to the hopeless. What is true in the position of the social activists is that a church which exists only for itself and its own enlargement is a witness against the gospel, that the church exists not for itself and not for its members but as a sign and agent and foretaste of the Kingdom of God, and that it is impossible to give faithful witness to the gospel while being indifferent to the situation of the hungry, the sick, the victims of human inhumanity.[29]

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[29] Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 139-151, ProQuest Ebook Central.

Beyond biblical times to more recent expressions of support, outreach, and commitment to community development and improvement, one can see the church has been intricately engaged. The church was the rallying point for the ending of slavery because of its unifying presence and the basic mission of spiritual liberation it represented and fostered. This spiritual liberation led to a belief that in God, all are equal. The church excelled, and its leadership was instrumental in the passage of the Civil Rights Act and social improvements experienced in the African American Community. These leaders understood the need to exercise a broad range of leadership skills: being imaginative, innovative, emotionally engaged, and the need to improvise. They also had the ability to organize, plan, administer effectively, and maintain order.[30]

[30] Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman, and Donald C. Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 199.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the topic of Social Gospel and to provide an overview of it from its inception. Social Gospel was a Protestant Christian intellectual movement that gained prominence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Through the premise of the Social Gospel, many Christian principles were applied to social problems, particularly focusing on labor reforms. Issues such as poverty, nutrition and health, education, alcoholism, crime, race, and warfare were addressed by the Social Gospel movement. The future kingdom of God, along with doctrines of sin, salvation, heaven, and hell, were downplayed in favor of emphasizing social needs. Christ's second coming is believed to be conditional upon humanity's eradication of social evils, which explains why many early Social Gospel leaders were liberal and postmillennial. No other American reform movement enlisted as many volunteers, addressed as many issues, or achieved as many accomplishments. The First Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s, along with the Second Great Awakening during the first four decades of the nineteenth century, helped shape the nation’s political policies, social practices, and economic system, profoundly influencing its ethos and customs.

However, they did not produce nearly as much literature to elucidate the social teachings of scripture, evaluate the causes, nature, and scope of America’s social ills, or

suggest remedies for them as the Social Gospel did. Its proponents also used the terms social Christianity, social reform, social activism, social salvation, and social regeneration to describe their movement and ministry. The Social Gospel arose in the 1870s, gained momentum in the 1880s and 1890s, and had its greatest impact in the progressive years (1900-1920).[1] Although this objective sounds utopian, the figures who galvanized the social gospel movement never believed that the task would be easy, inevitable, or fully realized in any given historical context. Repeatedly, representatives of the social gospel balanced the themes of judgment and hope in their theologies. They preached, taught, and acted on the faith that God's judgment was upon the nation for sins such as poverty, militarism, and racism while also uplifting visions of hope that the nation might be reformed.[2] This chapter will discuss historical details and the historical application of the social gospel throughout the years, its impact on our national agenda, as well as the theological impact and implications of the social gospel movement.

A History of Social Gospel

In many ways, the origins of the social gospel movement can be found in a tradition of American evangelicalism that took root before the Civil War.[3] In 1914, Eugene Lyman, a professor of Christian ethics at Oberlin Theological Seminary, reflected

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[1] Rodney Stark, *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400866809.

[2] William McGuire King, "'History As Revelation' in the Theology of the Social Gospel," *Harvard Theological Review* 76, no. 1 (1983): 129, doi:10.1017/S0017816000018496.

[3] Timothy Lawrence Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), Introduction.

on the interconnection between the message of the biblical prophets and the social conditions of the modern world. For Lyman, Jesus was the "climax of Hebrew prophetic religion" and "in him we find eternal expression of the motives for social progress." If then we are to appreciate the full value of prophetic religion as a social force, we must turn to Jesus' thought of the kingdom of God."[4] In 1910, Ray Stannard Baker, one of the most prominent journalists of the Progressive Era, noted that religious faith would play an essential role in galvanizing various measures of progressive political reform—what Baker and others referred to as the "social awakening" occurring in many parts of the nation.

Between 1907 and his death in 1918, Walter Rauschenbusch was the most influential proponent of the social gospel movement in America, and his theology had a major impact on a diverse range of religious leaders in the decades following his death. As leaders like Walter Rauschenbusch strove to articulate their theological understanding of what by the early 1910s was being called the "social gospel," they were fundamentally transforming the way many Americans viewed the relationship between religion and social reform.[5] While many scholars date the social gospel's origin and apex roughly to the Progressive Era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they have long debated precise definitions of the social gospel, what persons/groups fall under the rubric of this term, and when this tradition ended.

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[4] Eugene W. Lyman, "Social Progress and Religious Faith," *The Harvard Theological* Review 7, no. 2 (April 1914): 148, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1507433?seq=1.

[5] Christopher H. Evans, "Kingdom Coming: The Social Gospel and the 'Social Awakening' in the Early Twentieth Century," in *The Social Gospel in American Religion: A History* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2017), 77–106, JSTOR, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1gk0962.7.

When the Federal Council of Churches in Christ was founded in December 1908, it adopted a modified version of the MFSS social creed and issued a report entitled "The Church and Modern Industry," written by Frank Mason North. An updated version of this report in 1912 concluded by reiterating social gospel principles—for example, that the church had a mission centered on "redemption of the individual in the world, and through him of the world itself, and there is no redemption of either without the redemption of the other."[6] On December 15, 1915, Woodrow Wilson became the first American president to speak before the Federal Council of Churches. When Wilson was elected president in 1912, he seemed to represent the triumph of certain social gospel ideals in the public arena. He was involved in a fiercely contested presidential campaign against two other political progressives, the incumbent William Howard Taft and former president Theodore Roosevelt, who ran as a third-party candidate of the newly formed Progressive Party.

Many social gospel leaders were drawn to Roosevelt's campaign, while others supported the Socialist Party candidate, Eugene Debs. Wilson, a former president of Princeton University and governor of New Jersey, was a relative political novice. However, he proved capable of winning the trust of many influential progressive leaders, including those in the social gospel movement.[7] Theologically, Wilson held more traditional beliefs, having grown up in the South as the son of a Presbyterian minister. However, he epitomized the aspirations of many social gospel Protestants who believed

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[6] Christopher Hodge Evans, *The Social Gospel in American Religion: A History*, (New York: NY, NYU Press, 2017), 78, https://www.degruyter.com/isbn/9781479842483.

[7] Paul S. Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture (Studies in Cultural History)* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 178.

that social reform coincided with creating a righteous nation.[8] At the same time that the Federal Council of Churches matured in the 1910s, a wide range of Protestant mission organizations helped craft a vision of the social gospel that supported both the ecumenical movement and the war. Many of these organizations emerged from the revivalist crusades of Dwight Moody in the late nineteenth century and were forged out of a desire to recruit young people into missionary service.

While devoted to international missions, these groups, including the Young Men's Christian Association and the Young Women's Christian Association, became important conduits for spreading social gospel ideals just before and after World War I. In the early years of the twentieth century, the Protestant student movement sponsored thousands of youth as foreign missionaries, many of whom emerged from collegiate chapters of the YMCA and YWCA. Of the approximately 4,500 Student Volunteer Missionaries who came from the United States and Canada between 1899 and 1914, more than 3,400 were affiliated with the YMCA or YWCA.[9] The impact of the social gospel on Protestant youth organizations like the YMCA and YWCA was substantial. First, the Y movement's work brought many American church leaders into contact with various international issues, as well as with religious leaders outside the West. Increasingly, these American social gospelers critiqued many aspects of earlier Western assumptions about the goals of foreign missions and the cultural superiority of the West. When World War I ended,

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[8] Ronald C. White, Jr., and C. Howard Hopkins, *The Social Gospel: Religion and Social Reform in American History* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1976), 179.

[9] William McGuire King, "'History as Revelation' in the Theology of the Social Gospel," *Harvard Theological Review* 76, no. 1 (1983): 109-129, doi:10.1017/S0017816000018496.

Eddy still held the dominant Protestant view that America and its allies had succeeded in advancing the cause of democracy and Christianity globally.

However, he soon demonstrated a growing disillusionment with the war that would influence the direction of the social gospel's development during the 1920s: “Our task, then, was not only to win or change individuals, all-important as that was, but to build a new social order and to Christianize the whole of life and all its relations, industrial, social, racial, and international ... We had not only to relieve poverty and misery but to remove their causes.”[10]

In the spring of 1917, Walter Rauschenbusch delivered the prestigious Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale Divinity School. Despite his disillusionment over the escalating conflict and the fact that America had declared war less than a week before he delivered his lectures, Rauschenbusch increasingly focused on Christianity’s role in the postwar world. In November 1917, these Yale lectures were published as his last book, *A Theology for the Social Gospel,* which became an influential work in the subsequent development of American theological liberalism as it sought to provide a clear theological template for interpreting what was now widely called the “social gospel.”[11] When *A Theology for the Social Gospel* was published, he was already showing the first symptoms of the cancer that took his life in July 1918. The figure who perhaps was most motivated to try to uphold Rauschenbusch’s legacy was Harry Ward.

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[10] Walter Rauschenbusch and Christopher H. Evans, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America (Politics and Culture in Modern America)* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 163.

[11] Ronald C. White, Jr., and C. Howard Hopkins, *The Social Gospel: Religion and Social Reform in American History* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1976), 160.

In many ways, it fell upon Ward to galvanize what a later era would call the "religious left." Writing to Rauschenbusch's widow, Pauline, Ward noted his desire to continue her late husband's work: "The banner he so gallantly lifted will not fall. It will be carried forward by many of those whom he has taught by word and pen."[12] For all their differing outlooks, both Protestant and Catholic social gospel leaders embraced a growing conviction that social reform required more than fidelity to social ideals; it required picking up Walter Rauschenbusch's urgent tone about the need to make major changes in American political and economic structures. In a college student study guide published in 1917, Harry Ward and Richard Henry Edwards, a YMCA secretary, noted that "the social program of Jesus calls not simply for deeds of service, but for social reconstruction."[13]

In December 1918, one month after the armistice ending World War I was signed, 135 prominent Protestant leaders organized the Interchurch World Movement (IWM). Heavily financed by wealthy patrons like John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and with John R. Mott serving as chairman of the executive committee, the IWM sought to expand the efforts of the Federal Council of Churches through an unprecedented range of proposed programs focused on evangelicalism and social outreach. IWM leaders dreamed that their efforts could fund a wide variety of mission-oriented projects that would unite churches in their mission objectives, both in the United States and abroad. The IWM laid out ambitious financial goals, planning to raise over $335 million by the spring of 1920.[14] One of the

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[12] Susan Curtis, *A Consuming Faith: The Social Gospel and Modern American Culture* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, 2001), Chapter 1.

[13] Shailer Mathews, "The Development of Social Christianity in America During the Past Twenty-Five Years," *The Journal of Religion* 7, no. 4 (1927): 376–386.

guiding forces behind the IWM was the Presbyterian mission executive Robert Speer, who had a providential sense that Allied victory in the war, the Prohibition Amendment, and the IWM went hand in hand.

While not identified with the social gospel, Speer had a deep passion for Protestant mission and church unity, viewing the IWM as the culmination of earlier Protestant (and social gospel) desires to Christianize the nation.[15] Social gospel leaders faced a dilemma at the war's end. On one hand, several figures believed that victory in the war and the passing of the Prohibition Amendment had ushered in a new era of optimism in America. On the other hand, many conceded that events like the U.S. Steel strike reflected the dangers of economic exploitation that the war only seemed to reveal. As Fred Fisher, chairperson of the IWM's Industrial Relations Department, asserted, the social teachings of Jesus needed to be "the dominating force in the adjustment of industrial relations."[16]

The IWM's Report on the Steel Strike marked one of the American Protestant social gospel's chief institutional triumphs and, in many ways, served as a model for various ecumenical documents on social issues that emerged later in the twentieth century. The report galvanized public opinion, leading to the passage of legislation abolishing the twelve-hour workday in the steel industry in 1923.[17] The report indicated a

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[14] Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1971), 182.

[15] Ronald C. White, Jr., and C. Howard Hopkins, *The Social Gospel: Religion and Social Reform in American History* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1976), 183.

[16] Philip C. Ensley, "The Interchurch World Movement and the Steel Strike of 1919," *Labor History* 13, no. 2 (July 3, 2008): 217-230, doi: 10.1080/00236567208584202.

[17] Christopher Hodge Evans, *The Social Gospel in American Religion: A History* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2017), Chapter 3, https://www.degruyter.com/isbn/9781479842483.

growing tension that developed throughout the twentieth century between religious leaders committed to radical iterations of the social gospel and conservatives, who perceived the efforts of leaders like Ward and McConnell as communism masked as religion. By the early 1920s, many religious leaders began to question how, and whether, the social gospel would survive in the churches. One individual raising this question was Harry F. Ward.

Through his growing activism outside the church and his influence on many of his students at Union Theological Seminary, Ward helped convince a post-World War I generation of Union Seminary graduates that the radicalism of Jesus needed to move beyond the "pious platitudes and undiscriminating generalities" of church pronouncements into concrete actions to change society.[18] In the early 1920s, Ward continued to insist that Christianity's goal was to promote a "cooperative commonwealth" based on the social teachings of Jesus.[19] Although the neo-orthodox tradition would not take full root in America until the 1930s, the tradition anticipated a broader backlash against the social gospel. Part of that critique emerged in 1928 when W. A. Visser't Hooft, a Dutch theologian who later became one of the principal founders of the World Council of Churches, wrote one of the first theological critiques of the social gospel in the United States.

Visser't Hooft was critical of the social gospel and found it to lack a significant amount of theological substance. Yet, he acknowledged that it manifested beliefs and

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[18] Ward Harry Frederick, *The Social Creed of the Churches* (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1915), 261.

[19] Doug Rossinow, "The Radicalization of the Social Gospel: Harry F. Ward and the Search for a New Social Order, 1898-1936," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 15, no. 1 (2005): 63–106, doi:10.1525/rac.2005.15.1.63.

practices distinctive from Europe, noting that it would be foolish to consider this theological movement dead. Visser't Hooft believed that the social gospel represented an effort by American churches to define their theological identity outside of Europe, but he also saw it as the emergence of something radically new in theology. Even as he questioned where this tradition would lead Americans: "The social gospel is therefore in a sense the first expression of American religious life which is truly born in America itself. May it therefore not be that America is yet at the beginning of the process of finding itself?"[20] Visser't Hooft's analysis largely focused on formal theological developments in American Protestant denominations, failing to recognize that by the mid-1920s, an important new chapter of the social gospel was being forged outside of these institutions.[21]

In 1923, Bishop Francis McConnell observed that a new spirit of radicalism was emerging in the nation's churches. In the aftermath of the Interchurch World Movement's collapse, McConnell conceded that the postwar era was creating a complicated social context that required established religious leaders to make room for more radical perspectives from a younger generation of activists. "So the first duty toward the social radical is to let him talk," McConnell asserted.[22] "The next duty is to listen to him, and the next is to try to put into effect whatever of his teaching seems sound."[23] Although

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[20] Willem Adolf Visser't Hooft, *The Background of the Social Gospel in America* (St Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1963), Chapter II.

[21] Willem Adolf Visser't Hooft, *The Background of the Social Gospel in America* (St Louis, MO: Bethany Press, 1963), Chapter II.

[22] Francis J. McConnell, "What Shall the Churches Do with the Young Radicals?," *The Journal of Religion* 3, no. 4 (1923): 398–412.

[23] Francis J. McConnell, "What Shall the Churches Do with the Young Radicals?," *The Journal of Religion* 3, no. 4 (1923): 398–412.

noting that for many church leaders political radicalism was hard to embrace, McConnell believed that these youth articulated an important message: "It is necessary to remember that among the cranks and wild fellows there are some true prophets of the Most High—men who stand in the direct line of succession from the prophets of old. Let them speak forth."[24] McConnell's comments are instructive for understanding the development of the social gospel movement after World War I.

Many historians have argued that the social gospel declined sharply after the war. By the 1930s, American proponents of the neo-orthodox theological tradition, associated with Reinhold Niebuhr, called for Christians to rearticulate a historical Protestant theology that underscored humanity's sinfulness and the naïveté of social gospel liberals in the face of societal evils.[25] One cannot overstate the impact that World War I had on many American religious leaders. The mass scale of wartime casualties, in which over eleven million were either killed or wounded, created a growing sense of revulsion against the prospect of any future wars. This sentiment was prevalent among hundreds of American clergy who had witnessed the war firsthand in Western Europe while serving as YMCA chaplains. As one of these former chaplains reflected in the immediate postwar period, "We thought, at least many of us did, that we were fighting for great ideals, and that the winning of the war would give us a better world. Well, we know differently now."[26]

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[24] Francis J. McConnell, "What Shall the Churches Do with the Young Radicals?," *The Journal of Religion* 3, no. 4 (1923): 398–412.

[25] Paul A. Carter, *The Decline and Revival of the Social Gospel; Social and Political Liberalism in American Protestant Churches 1920-1940* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1956).

[26] Merrill M. Hawkins, "Book Review: Social Gospel Liberalism and the Ministry of Ernest Fremont Tittle: A Theology for the Middle Class," *Church History* 67, no. 3 (1998): 605.

Some social gospel figures who embraced pacifism in the 1920s became international isolationists. However, several leaders, such as Sherwood Eddy, connected pacifism to a robust commitment to internationalism—especially critiquing long-standing assumptions that equated American imperialism with missionary success. The YMCA/YWCA, which had been moving in this direction before the war, played an even greater role in the interwar period in inspiring many social gospel leaders to recalibrate their thoughts. Eddy emphasized that the way to create world peace was through a thorough assessment of the social and economic practices of the West—practices that many social gospel leaders believed had contributed to the war. For many social gospelers, part of the war's impact was to increase their sense of urgency regarding the implicit evils of the capitalist economic system, reflected in what many of them saw as the symbiotic connection between capitalism, militarism, and imperialism.[27] A source of critical assistance to Sherwood Eddy's work in the YMCA was Kirby Page.

Born in Texas in 1890, Page had an early association with the YMCA. After his ordination as a Disciples of Christ minister and serving a church in Chicago, he became Eddy's personal secretary in 1916. In the aftermath of the war, Page was instrumental in organizing and leading Eddy's travel seminars, and he was an important figure in linking together the work of the YMCA and the FOR.[28] Page's theological and social commitments picked up where Walter Rauschenbusch left off, analyzing the range of issues exacerbated by capitalism and the war. Reflecting many of the social gospel

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[27] William McGuire King, "The Emergence of Social Gospel Radicalism in American Methodism," (PhD diss., Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 1977).

[28] Patricia Faith Appelbaum, *Kingdom to Commune: Protestant Pacifist Culture Between World War I and the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), Chapter 9, https://www-jstor-org.dtl.idm.oclc.org/stable/10.5149/9780807889763_appelbaum.

themes in Rauschenbusch's later writings, Page not only stressed the nonviolent character of Jesus's social teaching but also called on American Christians to engage in questions of internationalism, particularly examining the interconnection between capitalism and militarism. In 1927, he praised independence movements in younger nations that attempted to break out of long-standing cycles of Western colonialism. As a nation, Americans "are inordinately proud and are slow to recognize our own faults and excesses. Indeed, we are exceedingly self-righteous and honestly believe that we are ethically superior to other peoples."[29]

Along with Sherwood Eddy, Page noted that economic justice required Christians to engage with a multitude of issues related to internationalism, nonviolence, and, increasingly, American racism. Page was aware of the changing American demographics after World War I and observed increasing African American migration from the South to major industrial cities in the North. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, race riots erupted in several northern cities, including Chicago in 1919, resulting in the deaths of thirty-eight people. For Page, a great deal of the culpability for racism rested with White Christian churches: "First, many white Christians hold the extreme attitude toward the inferiority of Negroes and support discriminatory measures; and second, by silence, evasion, and neglect they permit unjust measures to be perpetuated."[30] By the late 1920s, the YMCA and its sister organization, the YWCA, partnered with the FOR to sponsor conferences and gatherings that brought together Black and White college-age youth.

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[29] Page Kirby, *Dollars and World Peace* (New York, NY: Garland Publishers, 1927), Chapter 5.

[30] Page Kirby, *Jesus or Christianity: A Study in Contrasts* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Doran and Company, 1929), Chapter 1.

These gatherings were designed to create the conditions for transformative interracial encounters between young people representing diverse racial-ethnic backgrounds, laying the groundwork for more long-term movements of social change in America.

Despite remaining administratively segregated until the late 1940s, the collegiate branches of the YMCA and YWCA played a critical role in the development of the social gospel during the interwar period. Led by figures like Sherwood Eddy and Kirby Page, the YMCA and YWCA not only promoted social gospel teachings related to economic justice and pacifism, but, along with the FOR, worked to create international and domestic cross-cultural and cross-racial gatherings. Despite the perceived radicalism of these movements, their efforts garnered support from influential leaders and networks within many established Protestant institutions. By the early 1930s, Riverside Church in New York emerged as a symbol of the institutional stature of the social gospel heritage in American Protestantism, led by its well-known minister, Harry Emerson Fosdick.[31] Fosdick's early ministry drew inspiration from social gospel figures like the liberal Baptist theologian William Newton Clarke and Walter Rauschenbusch.[32] Yet, even before his pacifist turn, Fosdick absorbed a religious mysticism from a figure who influenced many social gospel leaders during the interwar period, Rufus Jones.

While Jones was committed to the reform initiatives of the social gospel, ministers like Fosdick were also drawn to the therapeutic implications of Jones's theology, a template that Fosdick would later develop in many of his own writings in the

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[31] Fosdick Harry Emerson, *The Living of These Days: An Autobiography* (New York, NY: Harper, 1956), 293.

[32] Emerson, *The Living of These Days*, 110.

1920s and 1930s. Echoing themes explored in William James's seminal 1902 book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Jones's work combined an emphasis on religious experience with a focus on the dignity and worth of the individual, paralleling many strands of social gospel thinking.[33] Jones's combination of piety, mysticism, and social action would be fleshed out by a wide range of social gospel leaders like Fosdick in the interwar period.[34] Fosdick's symbolic place in American Protestantism was secured in 1930 with the founding of the institution that became a symbol of the social gospel's institutional legacy in America, the Riverside Church. Built across the street from Union and heavily financed by John Rockefeller, Jr., Riverside modeled the enduring social gospel tension between liberal-progressive proclamations of reform and the realities of institutional wealth.

Fosdick's career paralleled those of numerous other social gospel preachers during the interwar period who built national reputations as ministers of upper-middle-class churches. Among these well-known clergymen were New York City ministers Ralph Sockman, George Buttrick, and Henry Sloane Coffin, who, in 1926, became president of Union Theological Seminary, as well as Ernest Fremont Tittle in suburban Chicago, and Henry Hitt Crane in Detroit. Significantly, several of these "pulpiteers," including Fosdick, Coffin, and Tittle, were also major leaders of the mid-twentieth-century Protestant ecumenical movement.[35] While radicals like Niebuhr, Chappell, and

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[33] Rufus M. Jones, *Social Law in the Spiritual World: Studies in Human and Divine Inter-Relationship* (Philadelphia, PA: John C. Winston, 1904).

[34] William G. Chrystal, "Reinhold Niebuhr and the First World War," *Journal of Presbyterian History (1962-1985)* 55, no. 3 (Fall 1977): 285–298, JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23327895.

[35] Elesha J. Coffman, *The Christian Century and the Rise of the Protestant Mainline* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199938599.001.0001.

Ward offered distinctive variations of religious activism, many Protestant social gospel leaders continued to uphold older notions of working for a Christian social order, even as they critiqued many aspects of that goal. One of the best representatives of this tension was the Methodist theologian Georgia Harkness. Later in her career, Georgia Harkness referred to herself as a "hardy perennial"—an apt term, given her extensive work as a theologian, church leader, writer, and activist whose public career stretched from the end of World War I to the end of the Vietnam War.

The term also highlights her perseverance as a woman who fought to be heard within the male citadels of Protestant power. Harkness was the embodiment of post–World War I social gospel radicalism, embracing several causes of the political left. Nevertheless, she devoted much of her career to upholding long-standing Protestant institutions.[36] Like many social gospel liberals of her generation, Harkness embraced aspects of Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian realism, often referring to herself as a "chastened liberal." However, she and other liberals criticized Niebuhr's tendency to caricature their tradition as hopelessly naïve.[37] In 1941, Harkness served as one of the principal advisors for a new publication coming out of the Methodist student movement, motive magazine (intentionally spelled with a lowercase m). Motive was a publication of the Youth Division of the Methodist Church. While the journal was recognized as an official denominational publication, motive's editorial board and staff consisted of individuals like Harkness who were steeped in the social gospel.

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[36] Keller Rosemary Skinner, *Georgia Harkness: For Such a Time As This* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), Chapter 9.

[37] Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (New York, NY: Norton, 1992), 382.

The magazine offered its readers articles on contemporary social issues, commentary, poetry, and original artwork. From the perspective of many of its readers, motive was "the virtual national magazine of the entire American student Christian movement."[38] In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the majority of Protestant social gospel leaders took for granted the singular role of Western churches in the wider work of global mission and evangelicalism. Josiah Strong's views about the cultural superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race remained a strong sentiment even among the most progressive church leaders before World War I. However, the social gospel's view of social salvation animated a range of mission leaders to rethink their purpose. By the mid-1930s, two very different Asian religious leaders—Mohandas Gandhi and Toyohiko Kagawa—were raising these questions in new ways for American social gospel leaders. Gandhi's nonviolent campaign for Indian independence from Great Britain increasingly drew the attention of numerous mission leaders in the West.

In the 1920s, E. Stanley Jones, a prominent Methodist missionary, helped introduce Gandhi to many Americans through written accounts of his friendship with the Indian leader. Although Gandhi was a Hindu, his public addresses and writings bore strong echoes of liberal Protestantism, particularly his emphasis on the historical example of Jesus. For instance, Gandhi was extremely fond of the hymn "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" for its focus on Jesus' earthly suffering. As we noted earlier, this focus on Jesus' humanity contributed to a long-standing social gospel theme that the true disciple of Jesus needed to be ready to suffer, and perhaps even die, for his or her beliefs.

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[38] David A. Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), Chapter 2, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400845996.

While Gandhi's attraction to liberal interpretations of Jesus resonated with many social gospel figures, he also highlighted an emerging worldview among many liberal Protestants that America needed to embrace and learn from the wisdom of the East. Sherwood Eddy succinctly observed that Gandhi was "the greatest personality I ever met and the greatest saint on earth during our generation."[39]

Although Gandhi became a frequent point of reference among a wide range of religious leaders during the 1920s and 1930s, Toyohiko Kagawa represented for many social gospel Protestants, the hope of an emerging global Christianity. Born in Japan in 1888, Kagawa was disowned by his family as a teenager after his conversion to Christianity. After becoming a Presbyterian, he had the opportunity to attend Princeton Theological Seminary and, upon returning to Japan, engaged in a well-publicized ministry in the industrial slums of Kobe. Kagawa's theology reflected a mix of influences. Unlike Gandhi, who affirmed religious diversity, Kagawa promoted more traditional evangelical Protestant notions of the exclusive truth of Christianity. Yet Kagawa strongly embraced many aspects of the social gospel. Influenced by Walter Rauschenbusch, Kagawa frequently wrote and preached about Jesus' life and death as a model for creating a transformed society. "Jesus' understanding of the Gospel included economic emancipation (preaching to the poor), psychological emancipation (healing the broken-hearted), social emancipation (recovery of sight to the blind), and political emancipation (setting at liberty them that are bruised)."[40]

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[39] Eddy Sherwood, *Eighty Adventurous Years: An Autobiography* (New York, NY: Harper, 1955), 209.

[40] Robert Shaffer, "'A Missionary from the East to Western Pagans:' Kagawa Toyohiko's 1936 U.S. Tour," *Journal of World History* 24, no. 3 (September 2013): 577–621.

Kagawa and Gandhi had a significant influence on many Protestant leaders, exposing Americans to religious and cultural ideas from parts of Asia and reinforcing the social gospel's appeal to nonviolence. This legacy became especially vital to the Fellowship of Reconciliation and its most important leader by the end of the 1930s, A. J. Muste. Heavily influenced by Walter Rauschenbusch and Rufus Jones, Muste became a pacifist in 1916 and left parish ministry to become a full-time social activist. In 1921, he helped establish the Brookwood Labor College in Westchester County, New York, with a faculty that included various social activists and labor leaders. However, by the mid-1930s, Muste experienced a "reconversion" to pacifism, and much of his professional life thereafter, until his death in 1967, was devoted to his work for the FOR. Perhaps more than any other figure of the interwar period, he helped to translate Gandhian views of nonviolence into a working strategy for social change. In the 1920s and 1930s, most social gospel pacifists viewed pacifism as an act of individual conscience. On one hand, he questioned the perspectives of older social gospel pacifists who often equated pacifism with one's individual choice to do no harm in personal behavior.

On the other hand, he also rejected the Christian realist perspective of Reinhold Niebuhr, which stated that pacifism represented the failure of liberals to understand the collective nature of social sin. The impact of Kagawa and Gandhi on American religious leaders like A. J. Muste was significant in the development of the social gospel in America. For many church leaders influenced by the idealism of the social gospel, Gandhi and Kagawa demonstrated how Eastern religious leaders were challenging Western colonialism, imperialism, and militarism. They also helped many social gospel leaders in the 1930s envision new possibilities for societal change that did not succumb to

the pessimism of leaders like Reinhold Niebuhr, who, by the end of the 1930s, dismissed pacifism as a myopic philosophy.[41] In 1949, Howard Thurman, an African American minister of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples in San Francisco, published one of the most important, and in some ways overlooked, theological works of the mid-twentieth century, *Jesus and the Disinherited*.

Like an earlier generation of social gospel liberals, Thurman asserted that Jesus' teachings needed to be primarily understood in terms of how he reached out to the poor. For Thurman, racial justice not only depended on how individuals understood the prophetic teachings of Jesus but also required a deeply felt personal sense that Jesus' message empowered people of faith to confront the social sins of racism to create a just world: "[Jesus] knew that the goals of religion as he understood them could never be worked out within the then-established order. Deep from within that order he projected a dream, the logic of which would give to all the needful security."[42] In this new society "there would be room for all, and no man would be a threat to his brother. 'The kingdom of God is within.'"[43] During the 1930s, Thurman's ministry intersected with a wide range of Protestant social gospel networks. He was especially active in the YMCA and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, where, like other social gospel liberals of the interwar period, he encountered Gandhi and his teachings on nonviolence.

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[41] Christopher Hodge Evans, *The Social Gospel in American Religion: A History* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2017), 1-20, https://www.degruyter.com/isbn/9781479842483.

[42] Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996), 11, EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=715753&site=ehost-live.

[43] Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996), 11, EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=715753&site=ehost-live.

Thurman's professional and personal odyssey reached a climax in 1953, when he became the dean of the chapel at Boston University, where he mentored a young graduate student in philosophy, Martin Luther King, Jr. Years later, after King emerged as a national civil rights leader, he often carried a copy of Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited* during his travels.[44] Thurman's influence on Martin Luther King, Jr., was matched by that of Benjamin Mays, an often-overlooked African American theologian and educator. As the longtime president of Morehouse College, Mays helped shape the religious and social worldview of many African American leaders in the mid-twentieth century, including King. One of Mays's biographers referred to him as the "schoolmaster" of the civil rights movement.[45] Mays played a vital role as a mentor to many generations of students at Howard University and Morehouse College, including Martin Luther King, Jr.; he also had a significant impact on African American churches by promoting the progressive theological and social reform agenda of the social gospel. Those involved in the classic social gospel movement emerging from early twentieth-century American Protestantism believed in the power of churches to disseminate their teachings on social questions to the larger culture. Many social gospel leaders hoped that their policies would extend into the nation's political institutions, whereby Protestant social-ethical teachings might be responsible for "perfecting" American social-political institutions.

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[44] Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1996), 11, EBSCOhost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=715753&site=ehost-live.

[45] Randal Maurice Jelks, *Benjamin Elijah Mays Schoolmaster of the Movement: A Biography* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), Chapter 9.

Conclusion

In summarizing this chapter and describing how the study of the social gospel is foundational to my anticipated doctoral project, the chapter offers an in-depth look at the historical context of the social gospel; how the concept was formulated from its inception, who the key actors were in its formulation, and its impact and relevance in American and global society over the years. As part of this exploration, the chapter examines the rise of urban industrialization in the late nineteenth century, which is believed to be the origin of the social gospel. We will also see how the social gospel emphasized that Jesus could remedy the problems caused by "Gilded Age" capitalism, even though it was not exclusive to Protestant churches. The leaders of the Social Gospel Movement took Jesus' message "love thy neighbor" into pulpits, published books, and lectured across the country. Other leaders, mostly women, operated settlement houses designed to alleviate the suffering of immigrants living in cities like Boston, Massachusetts; New York; and Chicago, Illinois.

Their mission was to draw attention to the problems of poverty and inequality, especially in America's growing cities. We see the YMCA and the YWCA arise out of the Social Gospel movement as well. The historical context of the social gospel movement is crucial and relevant to my doctoral project because it provides a solid foundation for why the church needs to revisit our role as ministers of the gospel and how we should minister the gospel from a tangible perspective. By examining the historical context of the social gospel movement, one can see that much of what initiated the movement from the outset was the need for people to witness the gospel in action through programs and services that would help families and individuals who were struggling. The

social gospel movement offers a profound perspective that demonstrates the necessity for the gospel to be one of action and not just words and sermons. My doctoral project will emphasize and highlight the necessity of an active church, a church that seeks to implement the gospel through partnerships with government, services, and programs for vulnerable populations executed in the name of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Liberation Theology draws from the core values of the Christian tradition to reinterpret an old problem in a drastically new way. The problem of poverty and marginalization has been a recurrent part of human history, and an issue that Christian leaders and theologians have repeatedly addressed since the inception of Christianity.[1] However, the Church rarely questioned the social systems that allowed for the existence of such poverty in the first place. Moreover, the evaluation of poverty changed radically after the Protestant Reformation, when criticism of the monastic lifestyle led progressively to an emphasis on labor and economic prosperity in those regions influenced by Protestantism. Such prosperity was then theologically construed as a spiritual vocation and as a way of praising God. Here we see a transition from the medieval understanding of poverty as a path to salvation for the poor and the wealthy to a more negative approach in which poverty is seen as a sign of lack of religious fervor and hard work.[2] When religious communities advocate the cause of the disenfranchised, the poor, and those who are marginalized because of their race, class, or gender, the outcome

[1] Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350– 550 AD* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 464.

[2] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism and Other Writings*, P. R. Baehr and Gordon C. Wells, trans. (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2002), xxxviii.

will be a more just, free, peaceful, and ultimately more united society. [3] The Christian option for the poor is a theocentric option. Such a position is grounded in scripture and is reflected in the teaching of the most recent popes. In the law, it is quite explicitly because of who God is that the people are to protect the widow and orphan (Ex. 22:20–26), to leave part of the harvest for the poor (Lv. 19:9–10), and to give generously to the poor (Dt. 15:1–11); the Psalms, Proverbs, and the prophets are filled with praise to God for God's care for the poor and needy; and such a partiality, as was argued above, can be seen throughout the ministry of Jesus.

The question of theological method—of shaping one's very approach to the theological task with the option for the poor—is to be identified more strongly with liberation theologies. These are theologies that seek to liberate as much as to reflect upon the theme of liberation, and they do so by embracing a particular perspective from which to see reality in a new and more adequate way. This aspect of the option for the poor is thus epistemological or hermeneutical.[4] "Whoever endeavors to struggle against injustice and to bring about justice in the world works in a quite direct way with the God of revelation and of love and grace."[5] Such a passage demands a vision of the Christian's participation in the theodramatic struggle as including the active rejection of injustice,

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[3] David Hollenbach, *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 97.

[4] Todd Walatka, "Liberating Theodramatics," in *Von Balthasar and the Option for the Poor: Theodramatics in the Light of Liberation Theology* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 169–211, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1kk664d.11.

[5] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Epigraph from Balthasar, Explorations in Theology* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1989), 3.360.

and it further demands focusing one's attention upon the particularity of Jesus Christ to see God's own partiality to the poor and oppressed enacted on the world stage.[6]

Liberation Theology

The theology of liberation was developed in the 1960s to argue for the liberation of groups including women, people of all races, and creeds from economic and political bondage who were mostly poor. It is these theologians who understand the need to be committed to social movements to support the oppressed and revolutions that are dedicated to changing the structure of society. Liberation is multidimensional, and so is human experience. The rigid compartmentalization and boxes that restricted dialogue and fluidity of ideas are fading away. Moving and flowing within human bodies are complex, multilayered, and dynamic identities. This means that, since liberation may appear in different forms, what binds them together is a common demand for freedom and justice, to be heard and to seek human fulfillment.[7] In the 1960s, Gutiérrez began reflecting on the social and political implications of the Christian faith from the perspective of the poor and the oppressed.

Rereading the Gospels from the underside of history, Latin American theologians asked social questions that traditional theology ignored: What does it mean to love my neighbor if my neighbor is an oppressed class? What are the political implications of faith in Christ? They recognized the presence of God in the pitiful bodies and faces of the poor

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[6] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Epigraph from Balthasar, Explorations in Theology* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1989), 3.360.

[7] Johnny Bernard Hill, *Prophetic Rage: A Postcolonial Theology of Liberation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=4859218.

and suffering, identifying God with the poor, el Dios pobre, the poor God.[8] The Spanish and Portuguese colonized the Latin Americans and in the process they preached the gospel on the one hand and exploited the wealth of the people on the other hand in the name of the Church and state made one by theology and law. Moreover, according to Skidmore and Smith, the colonial masters subjected the Latin Americans, treating them like slaves in their own native land, and meted out violence to them and even killed some of them.[9] Liberation Theology is rooted in the special concern the Bible shows for the poor, but it has created controversy by sometimes relying on Marxist inspired analyses of poverty and oppression.

Liberation Theology is a theology to uphold the rule of justice (that is giving people what is due to them), with biblical injunctions and as such Liberation Theology could be seen as one of the tools for peace building in the affairs of men.[10] Liberation theology as a model is a way of exploring the Bible as a resource for the socio-economic and political critique of the status quo, and for the struggle for liberation. Although the Marxist method of liberation theology appeals to violence in sociopolitical and economic restructuring, modern liberation theology, like that of Gutiérrez and others like him appeals for peaceful reformation.[11] "When it comes to identifying the purpose of liberation, historians will often use Marxism as an analytical tool, with radical revisions

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[8] Michael R. Candelaria, *The Latino Christ in Art, Literature, and Liberation Theology* (Albuquerque, MN: University of New Mexico Press, 2018), 45.

[9] Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith, *Modern Latin America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 30-50.

[10] C. S. Evans, *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics and Philosophy of Religion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 125.

[11] J. S. Ukpong, ed., *African Biblical Interpretation: A Reader* (Uyo, Africa: Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, University of Uyo, unpublished).

to every Christian doctrine that one may consider to be traditional. The constant theme in liberation theology is that the poor are the place of redemption. It was among the poor that Jesus desired to establish his seat of redemption."[12]

Karl Barth (1886–1968) is renowned for his wonderful commitment to theology. He is less often seen as a theologian in and for politics, if not a political theologian, both in his lifetime and now. Barth's political theology was always a pastoral theology, but his pastoral practice was not so much sympathetic as challenging; it was to call people to responsibility, to the service of God in the world, and so to a humanity which was in analogy to God's reality. God's word "frees us from the godless entanglements in this world, to free, grateful service to his creatures."[13] The claim upon the church, therefore, is for total faithful service to God, and so service throughout God's creation. The church must be church, but not for or in itself in any exclusive way.[14] Liberation Theology seems to agree with the concept of Marxism in the area of social analysis which condemns the oppression and neglect of the poor in the society. Gustavo states further that though the Marxist uses philosophy and the political approach in his thoughts, Marxism remains an instrument in the hand of every liberation theologian.

He also agrees that there is a dialogue between the theology of liberation and Marxism.[15] The idea of Marxism which deals with the socio-economic and political

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[12] Oscar Romero, "Homily on Christmas Eve," Romero Trust, http://www.romerotrust.org.uk/homilies-and-writings/homilies/i-bring-you-great-joy-saviour-born.

[13] Ashley John Moyse, *Karl Barth and Post-Reformation Orthodoxy* (London, UK: London T and T Clark, 2016), 1.

[14] William T. Cavanaugh and Peter Scott, eds., *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2019), 125-136.

[15] J. Andrew Kirk, *Liberation Theology: An Evangelical View from the Third World. New Foundations Theological Library* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1979), 178.

sphere of man having total freedom from suffering and poverty gives a great boost to liberation theology when looking at it from a socio-economic and political point of view.[16] Segundo lays down two hermeneutical conditions for the possibility of a genuine liberation theology. First, the interpreter must interpret current events in such a way that they provoke questions sufficiently general, basic, and rich to challenge us to question our conventional beliefs about life, death, knowledge, society, politics, and the world. Second, theology needs to ask new and decisive questions. However, if theology responds to the new challenges without revising its conventional reading of the Bible, it shuts down the dynamic movement of the hermeneutic circle. On the other hand, if interpretation of the scripture does not keep up with the changes in historical circumstances, then the latter will remain without response or will receive old and outdated responses.

A complete hermeneutic circle, on the other hand, satisfies the condition of raising suspicions about current circumstances that lead to a new interpretation of the Bible.[17] Much of what is stated about liberation theologies today is true: they have failed to affect the dominant U.S. academy's understanding of the theological task; the poor are indeed poorer today than when the prophetic explosion of Liberation Theology occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s; Liberation Theology has isolated itself from the broader U.S. religious studies academy. However, these challenges do not necessarily mean the demise of liberation theologies. Instead, they are invitations for them to grow.

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[16] José Míguez Bonino, *Revolutionary Theology Comes of Age* (London, UK: SPCK, 1975), 86-105.

[17] Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, John Drury, trans. (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1976), 8.

Ultimately, the starting point of Liberation Theology is not ethics or social theory; it is a theological vision of the sacred embodied in concrete faith communities. Liberation Theology must remain deeply connected to social movements for it to survive. At its core, Liberation Theology can never be exclusively academic.[18]

Breaking with the status quo Christ of official Catholicism, liberation theologians turned to the historical Jesus as the point of departure for a new Christology, purportedly resulting in the doctrine of Christ the Liberator. Ironically, the liberator Christ becomes, at times, something far removed from anything that could resemble a first-century Palestinian Jew. Latin American Liberation Theology, born in the late 1960s, argues that nonpersons, the poor and oppressed, must be the starting point and center of theological reflection. A theology that does not begin with the faith, life, and struggles of those from the underside of history is not a true Christian theology.[19] Academic Liberation Theology, admittedly, has become increasingly detached from the everyday lives of ecclesial Christians. Nonetheless, the notion that the era of Liberation Theology is past and its effectiveness undermined is untrue. Proclamations of the death of liberation theologies in general are unfortunate as they lead to a disregard for oppressed peoples and to their increasing marginalization in the contemporary context.[20]

It is important to note the way liberation theologies in the United States distinguish themselves from the tradition as represented by figures such as those just

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[18] Michelle A Gonzalez, *A Critical Introduction to Religion in the Americas: Bridging the Liberation Theology and Religious Studies Divide* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2014), 2.

[19] Peter C. Phan, "Method in Liberation Theologies," *Theological Studies* 61 (2000): 40–63.

[20] D. G. Hart, *The University Gets Religion: Religious Studies in American Higher Education* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 112.

named. It is just as important to note that liberation theologians are typically trained in the writings of European and White (male) American thinkers, and their work reflects this training. In a more general sense, liberation theologies in the United States are part of the larger liberal theological development and debate that marks the latter half of the twentieth century. Liberal Theology and the liberal religion movement to which it corresponds attempted to bring theological inquiry and religious faith into line with the pressing sociopolitical issues of the twentieth century. One of the hallmarks of liberation theologies has been their dialogue with the social sciences. This emphasis on social science has led to a broader engagement with society, but not at the grassroots level.

Liberation theologians speak of structural social issues, yet they do not focus sufficiently on everyday religion. Methodologically, this kind of approach involves theoretical borrowing for theology from other fields. Yet Liberation Theology can fruitfully turn to the social sciences not only to offer an analysis of the broader social picture but also to examine concrete, localized religion.[21] Liberation Theology needs to be understood as a continuing process of re-contextualisation, a permanent exercise of serious doubting in theology. [22] Latin American liberation theologians held the conviction that only teaching and preaching based on the Jesus of history could effectively drive home the point that social injustices are not to be tolerated: "No authority can allow just anything whatever, justice and exploitation are not so indiscernible that way, and Christ died to show that not just anything is permissible but not just any Christ. The historical

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[21] Sheila Briggs and Mary McClintock Fulkerson, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theology* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 495.

[22] Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender, and Politics* (London, UK: Routledge, 2000), 4.

Jesus is definitively irreconcilable with compromise and opportunism."[23] God is the God of true love, justice, and equity. To know Yahweh, which in biblical language is equivalent to saying to love Yahweh, is to establish a just relationship among men, it is to recognize the rights of the poor and that the God of biblical revelation is known through inter-human justice.[24] Liberation Theology is a key theme in the Bible, which expresses itself with both spiritual and social ramifications of salvation in Christ, and that it also addresses issues related to political freedom such as freedom from the institution of slavery, freedom from oaths and obligations, freedom from guilt and punishment, and freedom from sinful, destructive habits. Our freedom is not the ability to do whatever we desire, rather our liberation is from sin, oppression and calamities, and our ability to deny ourselves sinful pleasures and to please God.[25]

Emerging from a context characterized by class conflict, widespread poverty, political repression, conflict, and domination, Christ the Liberator motif presupposes a prior commitment to radical social change, raising the question: Whom is the liberator Christ supposed to address? The obvious answer for liberation theologians is the poor, the victims of social injustice, women, people of color, the unemployed, the homeless, the peasants, and the working class—socially oppressed and politically dominated. Commitment to Christ the Liberator means that Christians, as individuals and the church

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[23] José Miranda, *Marx and the Bible: A Critique of the Philosophy of Oppression* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1974), 35-292.

[24] Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973), 195.

[25] K. J. Youngblood, "Freedom," in *Holman ISS Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 601-602.

as a whole, must show preferential treatment to the poor.[26] Real Liberation Theology is that liberation that has, above all, respect for the dignity of human beings, the serving of the common good of the people, and a transcendence that looks before all to God, and from God derives its hope and its force.[27] Liberation Theology as a school of thought is made up not only of a small central circle of clergymen, intellectuals and academics but also the many individuals and organisations who ensure its theories are turned into practice.[28] Liberation Theology is a theology that does not restrict itself to the personal or spiritual realms of life but also a theology that engages with economic, political, and cultural matters. Liberation Theology must deal not only with the concerns, questions, and issues of the discipline of theology traditionally conceived, but also understand the workings of the larger social world.[29] The history of African American churches in the United States is not entirely one of social justice and liberation, but an internalized spirituality has been a strong focus. During the Civil Rights Movement, justice emerged as central to African American Christianity, yet it is not pervasive in all African American churches.

Liberation theologies emerged in the late twentieth century, concerned with the transformation of social existence (i.e., liberation) as a religious quest. They are

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[26] Michael R. Candelaria, *The Latino Christ in Art, Literature, and Liberation Theology* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2018), 176.

[27] James R. Brockman and S. J. Maryknoll, *Illustrations, Maps, Notes, Index* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1982), viii, 241.

[28] Anna Grimaldi, "When Liberation Theology Met Human Rights," in *Liberation Theology and Praxis in Contemporary Latin America: As It Was in the Beginning?*, Pablo Bradbury and Niall H. D. Geraghty, eds. (London, UK: University of London Press, 2025), 131-58, http://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.25197181.11.

[29] H. Lacey, "On Liberation," *CrossCurrents* 35, no. 2/3 (1985): 219–241, JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24458875.

contextual, tied to the experiences and needs of concrete communities. They are political in nature and religious in commitment. For most people in the United States, Latin American Liberation Theology is typically the first form of Liberation Theology of which they become aware. While the importance and influence of Latin American Liberation Theology cannot be ignored, within the U.S. context, Liberation Theology was first presented in the form of Black Theology. It was James Cone's Black Theology, Black Power, and A Black Theology of Liberation that set the initial tone for Liberation Theology in the United States as a systematic theology. The category of Black Liberation Theology emerged in the late 1960s on both ecclesial and academic fronts through the Statement by the National Committee of Black Churchmen on July 31, 1966, and the publication of James H. Cone's *Black Theology and Black Power*.

The ecclesial and academic roots of this theology are significant.[30] Certainly, Black Theology realizes that when a society performs ungodly acts against the poor in the name of God, there may come a time when the oppressed might have to renounce all claims to that kind of "faith" in God in order to affirm authentic faith in God. Sometimes because of the very nature of oppressed existence, the oppressed must define their being by negating everything oppressors affirm, including belief in the God of oppressors. The oppressed must demonstrate that all communications are cut off.[31] On the one hand, Black Theology believes that the emphasis on heaven in Black churches was due primarily to White slave masters whose intention was to transfer slaves' loyalties from

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[30] James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966–1979* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 19–26; James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 5.

[31] James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation: 50th Anniversary Edition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2020), 16.

earthly reality to heavenly reality. In that way, masters could do what they willed about this world, knowing that their slaves were content with a better life in the next world.

The considerable degree to which Black slaves affirmed the worldview of masters was due to their inability to change life on earth. But the rise of Black power and Black Theology brings with it a change in the focus of Blacks.[32] While Black, Latin American, and White feminist theologies of liberation are able to point to texts that mark the inauguration of new ways of doing theology beyond the White Western male norm, such as James Cone's *Black Theology and Black Power* (1969) and *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1971), Gustavo Gutiérrez's *Teología de la Liberación* (1971), and Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father* (1973), the concurrent but informal reader *AmerAsian Theology of Liberation* (1973) was not followed by a similar landmark publication to inspire later generations of Asian American theologians.[33] Theologies of liberation, whether willingly or unwillingly, have become irrelevant as a driving force of liberation, or even as a comrade of liberation movements, and instead have become what Althaus-Reid calls "theological science fiction," morally constructing its subjects as an undifferentiated and innocent mass.

At least in the United States, they have been effectively decoupled from the masses in all but a handful of churches. Therefore, any attempt to deploy them today must first answer the question: Why now?[34] Within the classic formulation of Black

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[32] Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation,* 16.

[33] W. T. An, *An Asian American Theology of Liberation* (Amherst, MA: Lever Press, 2023), 273-302, JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.12789659.16.

[34] W. T. An, "Notes," in *An Asian American Theology of Liberation* (Ann Arbor, MI: Lever Press, 2023), 273–302, JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.12789659.16.

Theology, for instance, in its most prophetic sense, liberation is focused upon the relationship between the Black experience and a faith in God as an emancipatory force during human affairs. Specifically rooted in the Judeo-Christian idiom, the evidence of God's liberating power is found in the biblical imagery and stories of freedom (i.e., the Exodus narrative in the Hebrew Bible) as well as scriptural mandates by Jesus that true followers would give voice to the voiceless and uplift the downtrodden (i.e., Lk. 4:18–19 in the New Testament). Therefore, from an African American Christian perspective, liberation is the positive transformation of unequal personal and societal power relations in the merger of divine and social justice in the world.[35]

If the wellspring of liberation theological classification is strictly defined by a culture of Black struggle and heroic ingenuity in response to suffering and oppression wrought by White supremacy, does that mean that the realization of liberation qua the end of White supremacy also marks the end of Black Theology? Instead, one might argue that these new theological perspectives were more about liberalization than liberation. Put another way, to an extent, the latter-day expression of the Black freedom struggle shifted from the opportunity to make choices to specific choices themselves.[36] Prophetic rage has signified the power and courage of Black people to fight against those very systems that have sought to undermine their very being. Black religion has also played a pivotal role in offering a prophetic critique of the values, beliefs, and rituals that the Western world in

[35] Juan Floyd-Thomas, "Liberation in African American Theology," Anthony B. Pinn and Katie G. Cannon, eds., in *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology, Oxford Handbooks* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/34322?login=true.

[36] Juan Floyd-Thomas, "Liberation in African American Theology," eds. Anthony B. Pinn and Katie G. Cannon, in *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology, Oxford Handbooks* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/34322?login=true.

general, and America in particular, has held in such high regard when it comes to freedom, justice, human dignity, and the like.[37]

It represents the challenge of establishing a political theology of difference, rooted in the prophetic call for justice and reconciliation in the church and society. By summoning and reclaiming the prophetic dimensions of Black religion and Black Theology's challenge to White supremacy, Prophetic Rage offers a new vision for resisting and overcoming empire, and its related tentacles of racism, patriarchy, violence, militarism, and economic exploitation. Beverly W. Harrison observes in "The Power of Anger in the Work of Love: Christian Ethics for Women and Other Strangers" that women's bodies have taught us great lessons about the power of righteous anger, so prophetic rage is insightful as we think about forging a constructive postcolonial theology of liberation for our present age.[38] Today, there is a need to reintroduce Black Theology to a new generation of thinkers, and also to recontextualize the Black theological task in light of the reconfiguration of global society.

This need also arises out of the postmodern dilemma, the problem of nihilism, as well as the social, political, and economic context ushered in by a new age of technology, globalization, and empire. The most powerful way to resist meaninglessness is prophetic rage, or the refusal to accept the realities of structural injustice such as poverty, escalating militarism, genocide, and housing discrimination. I suggest that Black Theology may also provide a gateway or insights into the prospects of overcoming the broader quest for

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[37] Johnny Bernard Hill, *Prophetic Rage: A Postcolonial Theology of Liberation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 2, ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=4859218.

[38] Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 195.

meaning in Western society.[39] Black Theology is a theology of Black liberation. It seeks to plumb the Black condition in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, so that the Black community can see that the gospel is commensurate with the achievements of Black humanity. Black Theology is a theology of "blackness." It is the affirmation of Black humanity that emancipates Black people from White racism, thus providing authentic freedom for both White and Black people.

It affirms the humanity of White people in that it says "No" to the encroachment of White oppression.[40] Christianity must be as much about being as it is about believing in the present age. As the mystical theologian Howard Thurman wrote more than half a century ago in his autobiography, *With Head and Heart*, Christian churches, perhaps Western more broadly, must integrate the intellectual of rationalism, the prophetic of a compassionate heart, the (and culture speaking) toughness with courage.[41] As a people committed to being instruments used by God that the people of God might experience life, we must have the courage and humility to choose deliberately to learn from each other as we seek to do justice to the challenges facing the socioeconomically disadvantaged members of our churches. "One hand washes the other," says an African proverb. The needs of those sitting in our pews should inform the content of our sermons and Bible studies as well as the strategies we develop to address such needs.

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[39] Johnny Bernard Hill, *Prophetic Rage: A Postcolonial Theology of Liberation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=4859218.

[40] J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 4.

[41] Johnny Bernard Hill, *Prophetic Rage: A Postcolonial Theology of Liberation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=4859218.

In my view, this exigency implies that clergypersons who are (expected to be) in tune with the holistic lives of their church members must not only allow the needs of their faith communities to shape their sermons, counseling, and pastoral ministry but also share such needs with academics with a view to shaping some of the academic offerings at the seminaries and faculties of theology. If the latter are relevantly equipped, they will come a long way in enabling "graduate-ness,"—that is, graduates who will relevantly plow back into their communities—and in bringing about the transformation of the lives of our communities, particularly the disadvantaged others.[42] In seeking strategies to alleviate poverty, for example, both clergy and Black practical theologians alike must first and foremost listen to what the poor themselves are suggesting with regard to their situations. Poverty, to them, is like the proverbial itching sore; they can provide only relevant suggestions.

We need to allow the poor's proposed strategies to inform our efforts toward redress. In doing so, we might be surprised to learn just how resilient even marginalized agency can be.[43] Liberation, in Black Christian thought and experience, has a twofold connotation: one is spiritual (that is, salvation from sin and deliverance from a sinful lifestyle), and the other is sociopolitical (that is, emancipation from slavery and its effects on mind, body, and community). These two notions of liberation have clearly shaped and framed the work of Black churches and Black theologians, including practical theologians. Black practical theologians have pursued the theme of liberation in this

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[42] Dale P. Andrews and Robert London Smith, Jr., eds., *Black Practical Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015), 79, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[43] Andrews and Smith, *Black Practical Theology,* 201.

twofold sense in much of the work they have sought to do in providing resources for preaching, Christian education, worship, and pastoral care.[44] While Black Theology affirms blackness, that theology construed as an antiwhite reactionary theology. The notion of blackness is not merely a reference to skin color but rather is a symbol of oppression that can be applied to all persons of color who have a history of oppression, as well as other marginalized groups such as homosexuals.

Black liberation theologians seek to apply theology in a manner that affirms the humanity of Blacks in ways that they believe were previously denied. Saying no to being oppressive helps Whites no longer see their oppression as normal and gives Blacks an understanding that their lives matter to God. Black Theology begins with the life experience of oppression and formulates theology respectively. The overall emphasis of Black Liberation Theology is the Black struggle for liberation from various forms of White racism and oppression, and it views the imperatives of the Christian Gospel to that end.[45] The teachings of Jesus are readily available to anyone who wishes to live by them as a basis for principles to spark action in the realm of civil liberties or rights. Commitment to the Christian faith is not required for a response to Christian principles. The Negro has grounded his belief in Christianity in an ethical code, the principles of which are not founded in an enduring faith and therefore devoid of content and the refreshment of a critical dimension.

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[44] Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *Post-Colonializing God: New Perspectives on Pastoral and Practical Theology* (London, UK: SCM Press, 2013), 112.

[45] J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 4.

The principles he esteems are not relevant to his contemporary needs. Thus, the Negro is forced to depend upon civil rights, religious feeling, sentiment, and color as substitutes for faith.[46] Moreover, the emergence of Black Theology, with its strident critique of the Black church, represents a self-conscious, theological development within a larger and much-longer discussion within the Black community and among Black intellectuals in particular, of various ideological persuasions, regarding the effectiveness, even the usefulness, of the Black church in the continuing project of racial uplift. For Black people, inside and outside the churches, have long held a deep communal expectation and a general assumption that the work of racial uplift is integral to the responsibility and vocation of the Black church.[47]

What is often said of theology in general is certainly true of liberation theologies as well: theology is a second-order enterprise. That is, theology can be understood as a reflection on "faith-based" commitments and activities. Theologians committed to the forms of liberation theology have developed their work as an attempt to respond religiously to the sociopolitical push for equality and full citizenship. It is this history of struggle, of effort to re-envision life in ways that promote justice and freedom, that on some level runs through the history of African Americans, Native Americans, Latino/as, Asian Americans, and other oppressed groups in the United States.[48]

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[46] Joseph R. Washington, Jr., "Are American Negro Churches Christian?," *Theology Today* 20, no. 1 (1963): 76-86, https://doi.org/10.1177/004057366302000109.

[47] Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, and Public Witness* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2014), 77, http://site.ebrary.com/id/10776527.

[48] Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas and Anthony B. Pinn, *Liberation Theologies in the United States: An Introduction* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2010), 1, https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9780814728574.001.0001.

Conclusion

According to Fernando Segovia, theology is undergoing a process of liberation and decolonization at present as it engages with a new framework for knowledge, variously called post-modernism and post-colonialism.[49] The study of religion itself remains a porous field, with little agreement among scholars surrounding the object of our study (religion) and the approach that unifies our scholarship (method). The way the U.S. academy uses the category of religion is overwhelmingly Western and is significantly influenced by Christianity. Theology appears to be limited largely to the study of Christianity. Adding to the conversation are debates about when the field of religion began. Numerous scholars have argued that non-Christian religions contain elements of liberation, albeit with a different register than what is traditionally understood by Christianity.[50] Liberation Theology, like all theology, seeks a biblical basis for its affirmations.

Thus, from the beginning, it has sought to find biblical parallels or grounds for its insistence on the primacy of the poor as locus theologicus.[51] God is present, reveals himself most clearly, where there is suffering. In other words, God is discovered or reveals himself in and through the lives of the poor. It is not surprising that liberation theology should reflect one of the central claims of Christianity, that "in Jesus of

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[49] Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonising Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 10.

[50] Miguel A. De La Torre, "Introduction," in *The Hope of Liberation in World Religions* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 10.

[51] Tim Noble, *The Poor in Liberation Theology: Pathway to God or Ideological Construct*? (London, UK: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2014), 29, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=869689.

Nazareth the God who liberates has become incarnate in human nature."[52] All Liberation Theology is contextual theology (as all Liberation Theology speaks about a very specific context of oppression) but not all contextual theology has liberation (in terms of resistance to oppression and the production of social change) as its primary purpose. The failure to recognize the basic distinction between liberation and contextualization, I would suggest, grows out of a fundamental misunderstanding of Liberation Theology.[53]

Liberation Theology, as a way of life, is not something that can be done in abstract from a privileged place in an academy; it requires a practical rather than a theoretical relationship with the practice of liberation and implies a 'living contact with the struggle of the poor.' Without this practical engagement in the struggle, words like 'the poor,' 'oppression,' and 'new society' are simply dictionary definitions. Liberation theologians (which includes anyone, trained or not, trying to 'think the faith in the face of oppression') therefore need to be actively engaged in the liberation struggle, and to be doing their theology to be used as a tool for the struggle, not as an intellectual exercise. This is why Liberation Theology calls for an 'option for the poor,' a statement of faith that God is on the side of all who are poor and oppressed against their oppressors.[54]

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[52] Tim Noble, *The Poor in Liberation Theology: Pathway to God or Ideological Construct*? (London, UK: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2014), 37, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=869689.

[53] Clodovis Boff, "Methodology of the Theology of Liberation," Robert Burr, trans., Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría, eds., in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology* (London, UK: St. Andrew's Research Repository, 1996), 3.

[54] Boff, "Methodology of the Theology of Liberation," 6.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Sociology is the scientific and systematic study of human society that focuses on society, human social behavior, patterns of social relationships, social interaction, and aspects of culture associated with everyday life.[1] The idea here is that social change is largely an adaptation to improvements in a society is technological environment. As a society is production possibilities improve due to technological advance, it becomes in the self-interest of some of its citizens to modify their behavior to take advantage of the new circumstances.[2] Sociology is an exciting and illuminating field of study that analyzes and explains important matters in our personal lives, our communities, and the world. At the personal level, sociology investigates the social causes and consequences of such things as romantic love, racial and gender identity, family conflict, deviant behavior, aging, and religious faith. At the societal level, sociology examines and explains matters like crime and law, poverty and wealth, prejudice and discrimination, schools and education, business firms, urban community, and social movements.

[1] William Little, "Sociology: A Twenty-First Century Major," American Sociological Association, https://www.colgate.edu/academics/departments-programs/department-sociology-and-anthropology/academic-program/sociology-major.

[2] J. Greenwood and N. Guner, "Social Change, The Institute for the Study of Labor," IZA, https://docs.iza.org/dp3485.pdf.

At the global level, sociology studies such phenomena as population growth and migration, war and peace, and economic development.[3] Sociological research has helped address questions like why 700 people died during a Chicago heat wave in 1995, or why the space shuttle Challenger exploded in 1986, identifying strategies to avoid such catastrophes in the future. The research that sociologists conduct can identify better approaches for supporting people with breast cancer. It can explain how social media platforms like X, formerly Twitter, profit from hostility between users. Sociologists do studies that show that jobs with unpredictable schedules are bad for your health and that homicide rates typically increase as inequality grows. Sociologists also study inequalities, such as gender or racial inequalities in workplaces. These studies can show how workplaces can create more inclusive cultures that benefit Black workers as well as other employees.[4]

As sociology entered the second half of the twentieth century, it was characterized by a significant degree of optimism. Theories proposing the 'end of ideology' may now appear naive, in view of those ideological disputes that later marked sociology, but they reflected a sense of the consensual moral values underpinning modern societies, and sociology's role in illuminating them. The discipline was clearly continuing to pursue the sociological ambition established by its founders. Nonetheless, sociology was soon to be

[3] University of North Carolina, "What Is Sociology?," University of North Carolina College of Arts and Sciences, Sociology, https://sociology.unc.edu/undergraduate-program/sociology-major/what-is-sociology/#:~:text=Sociology%20is%20an%20exciting%20and.

[4] Joya Misra, "What's Sociology? A Sociologist Explains Why Florida's College Students Should Get the Chance to Learn How Social Forces Affect Everyone's Lives," The Conversation, https://theconversation.com/whats-sociology-a-sociologist-explains-why-floridas-college-students-should-get-the-chance-to-learn-how-social-forces-affect-everyones-lives-222365.

subjected to two major assaults that portrayed its object, society, as an artifice in much the same way that classical sociology had conceived of notions of divine order.[5]

Interdisciplinary Field and Theoretical Framework

The idea of applying social science to improving human life has pervaded sociology, especially in the United States, since its inception. The first book published in this country with the word "sociology" in its title was Lester Ward's Dynamic Sociology: or Applied Social Science, which appeared in 1883. Sociological practice grows out of action studies but goes beyond them to focus more directly on programs of social action. Initially, this frequently involves planning action strategies and developing operational programs that are intended to produce the desired social changes. Such activities clearly involve the utilization of sociological knowledge and consequently are also part of the process of applying sociology. Following those initial activities, sociological practitioners may move into actual program implementation and administration. In such managerial and administrative roles, practitioners can still employ an overall sociological perspective, but most of the knowledge they draw on is essentially pragmatic and political in nature.

It seems reasonable, therefore, to exclude program implementation and administration from the direct process of applying sociology.[6] Sociology can be exciting because it teaches people ways to recognize how they fit into the world and how others

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[5] C. Shilling and P. Mellor, *The Sociological Ambition* (London, UK: Sage, London, 2001), 10.

[6] Marvin E. Olsen, "The Process of Applying Sociology," *Journal of Applied Sociology* 4 (1987): 1–12, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43481294.

perceive them. Looking at themselves and society from a sociological perspective helps people see where they connect to different groups based on the many different ways, they classify themselves and how society classifies them in turn. It raises awareness of how those classifications—such as economic and status levels, education, ethnicity, or sexual orientation—affect perceptions. Sociology teaches people not to accept easy explanations. It teaches them a way to organize their thinking so that they can ask better questions and formulate better answers. It makes people more aware that there are many kinds of people in the world who do not necessarily think the way they do.

It increases their willingness and ability to try to see the world from other people's perspectives. This prepares them to live and work in an increasingly diverse and integrated world.[7] Sociology is one of the youngest academic disciplines. French philosopher Auguste Comte coined the term "sociology" in the early nineteenth century. It was only in the late nineteenth century, however, that the discipline began taking definite shape and was beginning to be taught widely in universities and secondary schools. Despite its comparative youth as an academic discipline, sociology has become an established and accepted social science. Most universities and colleges now have departments of sociology, and there are few, if any, institutions of higher education that do not teach the subject.[8] Sociologists tend to emphasize structural and cultural factors rather than motivations or personality characteristics to understand human behavior.

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[7] Tonja R. Conerly, Kathleen Holmes, Asha Lal Tamang, and Jennifer Hensley, *Introduction to Sociology* (Houston, TX: OpenStax, Rice University, 2021), 24, https://open.bccampus.ca/browse-our-collection/find-open-textbooks/?uuid=74302a91-12c3-4876-bdce-12aa2a21b338&contributor=&keyword=&subject=.

[8] Carl L. Bankston, *Sociology Basics (Magill's Choice)* (Pasadena, CA: Salem Press, 2000), 1.

We believe that social organizations of all kinds are real entities and cannot be reduced to their individual members, and, hence, can be units of analysis.[9] The sociological imagination is an empowering tool. It allows us to look beyond a limited understanding of human behavior to see the world and its people in a new way and through a broader lens than we might otherwise use. It may be as simple as understanding why a roommate prefers country music to hip-hop, or it may open up a whole different way of understanding other populations in the world. For example, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, many citizens wanted to understand how Muslims throughout the world perceived their country, and why. From time to time this textbook will offer you the chance to exercise your own sociological imagination in a variety of situations.[10]

Sociology is the scientific and systematic study of human society that focuses on society, human social behavior, patterns of social relationships, social interaction, and aspects of culture associated with everyday life. Social research has influence throughout various industries and sectors of life, such as among politicians, policy makers, and legislators, educators, planners, administrators, developers, business magnates and managers, social workers, non-governmental organizations, and non-profit organizations, as well as individuals interested in resolving social issues in general.[11] Sociological theory—the attempt to explain society scientifically—began in the nineteenth century.

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[9] Marvin E. Olsen, "The Process of Applying Sociology," *Journal of Applied Sociology* 4 (1987): 1–12, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43481294.

[10] Richard T. Schaefer, *Sociology* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 82.

[11] William Little, "Sociology: A Twenty-First Century Major," Colgate University, American Sociological Association, https://www.colgate.edu/academics/departments-programs/department-sociology-and-anthropology/academic-program/sociology-major.

The foundations of sociology were laid by the middle of that century, and many of the concerns and explanations of the classical theorists still inform sociological theory today.[12] In contrast, contemporary theory is used to identify the set of theories that were developed in Europe and North America from the mid-twentieth century into the present.

Sociological reasoning predates the foundation of the discipline itself. Social analysis has origins in the common stock of universal, global knowledge and philosophy, having been carried out from as far back as the time of old comic poetry which features social and political criticism, and ancient Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.[13] Despite its comparative youth as an academic discipline, sociology has become an established and accepted social science. Most universities and colleges now have departments of sociology, and there are few, if any, institutions of higher education that do not teach the subject. Many high schools offer sociology courses, in addition to courses in the broader area of social studies. Sociologists study social life. This means that they concern themselves with the social groups that exist apart from the individuals within them, into which people are born and out of which they die. Sociologists look at how people are influenced by their cultures, beliefs, values, and ways of acting that they receive from other members of their groups.

These social scientists consider how groups transmit cultural traits to individuals through socialization. Sociologists study how the ways in which people work together or compete with one another lead to varying consequences for individuals in different social

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[12] Bert N. Adams and R. A. Sydie, *Contemporary Sociological Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Incorporated, 2000), 1, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[13] H. Nettleship, *A Dictionary of Classical Antiquities* (New York, NY: Macmillan and Co., 1895), 67.

positions. Sociologists examine institutions, established ways of meeting fundamental human needs through social interaction. Family life, economies, and political systems are all institutions that enable people to perform their basic shared tasks. Those who study sociology investigate how individuals involve themselves in the social world through interaction with others and through interpretation of the actions of others.[14] Sociologists around the world look closely for signs of what would be an unprecedented event: the emergence of a global culture. In the past, empires such as those that existed in China, Europe, Africa, and Central and South America linked people from many different countries, but those people rarely became part of a common culture.

They lived too far from each other, spoke different languages, practiced different religions, and traded few goods. Today, increases in communication, travel, and trade have made the world a much smaller place. More and more people can communicate with each other instantly—wherever they are located—by telephone, video, and text. They share movies, television shows, music, games, and information over the Internet. Students can study with teachers and pupils from the other side of the globe. Governments find it harder to hide conditions inside their countries from the rest of the world. Sociologists research many different aspects of this potential global culture. Some explore the dynamics involved in the social interactions of global online communities, such as when members feel a closer kinship to other group members than to people residing in their own countries. Other sociologists study the impact this growing international culture has on smaller, less-powerful local cultures.

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[14] Carl L. Bankston, *Sociology Basics (Magill's Choice)* (Pasadena, CA: Salem Press, 2000), 1.

Yet other researchers explore how international markets and the outsourcing of labor impact social inequalities. Sociology can play a key role in people's abilities to understand the nature of this emerging global culture and how to respond to it.[15] The rise of sociology can be better understood if it is born in mind that social conflicts and disputes themselves underwent a peculiar depersonalization during the period of industrial specialization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there was an increasing tendency for social disputes to be conducted not so much in the name of particular people, as in the name of certain impersonal principles and articles of belief. This seems obvious to us, so we often do not realize how strange and unique it was when people in the centuries came to be fighting no longer in the name of ruling princes and their generals, nor in the name of religion, but chiefly in the name of fixed in personal principles, like 'conservatism' and 'communism,' 'socialism' and 'capitalism.'[16] Sociologists will often consider the effects of environment on social institutions and forms of behavior. Historians attempt to reconstruct, analyze, and explain events in the past. Since all societies are products of historical change, this, too, is an area of interest to sociologists. However, while sociology overlaps substantially with all of these other behavioral disciplines, it is unique in its focus. In sociology, social relations lie at the center. The psychological, economic, political, geographic, and historical aspects of life are seen as different aspects of social relations.[17] Sociology has never had a revolution.

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[15] Tonja R. Conerly, Kathleen Holmes, Asha Lal Tamang, and Jennifer Hensley, *Introduction to Sociology* (Houston, TX: OpenStax, Rice University, 2021), 19, https://open.bccampus.ca/browse-our-collection/find-open-textbooks/?uuid=74302a91-12c3-4876-bdce-12aa2a21b338&contributor=&keyword=&subject=.

[16] N. Elias, *What Is Sociology?* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1978), 62.

[17] Carl L. Bankston, *Sociology Basics (Magill's Choice)* (Pasadena, CA: Salem Press, 2000), 4.

Classical sociology merely refers to early sociology, and it has never been overthrown or abandoned. On the contrary: Modern sociologists widely agree that the fundamentals of sociology outlined by the classical sociologists-Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Georg Simmel, and the rest still prevail.

Classical sociology is the model of sociology itself. Moreover, the classical conception of social reality is largely psychological (a matter of subjectivity), the classical logic of explanation is largely teleological (a matter of means and ends), and the classical subject is largely the person (including a number or group of persons). Social action is individual action..[18] Functionalism, also called structural-functional theory, sees society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of the individuals in that society. Functionalism grew out of the writings of English philosopher and biologist, Herbert Spencer, who saw similarities between society and the human body. He argued that just as the various organs of the body work together to keep the body functioning, the various parts of society work together to keep society functioning. The parts of society that Spencer referred to were the social institutions, or patterns of beliefs and behaviors focused on meeting social needs, such as government, education, family, healthcare, religion, and the economy.[19]

Functionalism originated in British anthropology. In particular, the Polish-British anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1943) proposed functional analysis as a solution

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[18] Donald Black, "Dreams of Pure Sociology," *Sociological Theory* 18, no. 3 (2000): 343–367, http://www.jstor.org/stable/223323.

[19] T. R. Conerly, K. Holmes, and A. L. Tamang, "What is Sociology? - Introduction to Sociology 3E," OpenStax, https://openstax.org/books/introduction-sociology-3e/pages/1-1-what-is-sociology?query=society&target=%7B%22index%22%3A0%2C%22type%22%3A%22search%22%7D#import-auto-id1203445.

for sociologists to interpret social situations through intuition rather than observation. According to Malinowski, this functional analysis brings scientific attention to the study of cultures different from those of the ones observing it. Thus, before analyzing a social phenomenon typical of a given culture—say, an institution, material object, or idea—people first must think about what function that social phenomenon has within this culture. The essential assumption of Malinowski's functionalism is that in every single civilization, every custom, material object, idea, and opinion fulfill some vital function, helping to both express and maintain it. This expression and maintenance of culture through phenomena that take place within it is called integration.[20]

Functionalist conceptions are predicated upon the premise that society is a social system made up of interrelated parts that work closely together towards reaching a state of structural equilibrium (homeostasis). The biological analogy of society with a living organism is used to underscore that both forms of life (organic and social alike) are made possible by the fulfillment of some vital functions, either by some specialized organs or by their social counterpart, that is, social institutions. The functionalist paradigm has its origins in the social thought espoused by Auguste Comte and was further developed in the sociology of Émile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer, as well as in anthropology by Bronisław Malinowski, among others important proponents of functional analysis in the social sciences.[21] Although it was born in a tradition of community studies that avoided grand theory and drew its insights from the careful observation of people in their

[20] Charlotte Nickerson, "Review of Functionalist Perspective and Theory in Sociology," Saul Mcleod and Olivia Guy-Evans, eds., *Simply Psychology* (February 2024).

[21] Mihai Stelian Rusu, "Street Names Through Sociological Lenses, Part I: Functionalism and Conflict Theory," *Social Change Review* 18, no.1 (2020): 144-176, https://doi.org/10.2478/scr-2020-0001.

environments, American sociology was largely characterized by the concept of functionalism for much of the twentieth century. Drawing on the ideas of Durkheim and best embodied by the work of Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), functionalism derived its name from the notion that the best way to analyze society was to identify the roles that different aspects or phenomena play. These functions may be manifest (explicit) or latent (hidden).[22]

Functionalism explores how social institutions (for example, 'the family' and 'the health system') work to make social groups function. The perspective assumes that societies, like biological organisms, have basic needs that must be met to survive. An example of such a 'need' is the importance of health. Functionalists consider that the social order is threatened if shared norms and values about health are not reinforced across social groups. These shared norms and values become widely accepted through socializing individuals, so functionalists are interested in studying the processes that are part of socialization. Functionalists are not just interested in social order. They also explore what causes disorder in social groups. The presence of social disorder reveals the complexity that exists within the social world.[23] These days 'functionalism' is a dirty word in the social sciences, though it deserves this bad reputation when placed alongside other offerings in sociology, including more recent ones, and judged in its own terms.

Whatever the true merits of the functionalist sociology pre-eminent in American sociology from the mid-1940s through to the early 1960s, the explosively critical reaction

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[22] Conley Dalton, *You May Ask Yourself: An Introduction to Thinking Like Sociologist* (New York, NY: Norton, 2009), 103.

[23] Ewan Ingleby, *Applied Sociology for Social Work* (London, UK: Sage Publications Ltd., 2018), 7, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526418746.

against it played a fateful role in the further development of contemporary social thought. However, the functionalism which came to dominate American sociology in the 1940s and 1950s was seen as a development of what American social theory had always been about.[24] Functionalism took a beating in the 1960s, when it was usurped by several theories frequently labeled Marxist theory or conflict theory. Whereas functionalists painted a picture of social harmony as the well-oiled parts of a societal machine working together (with some friction and the occasional breakdown), conflict theory viewed society through exactly the opposite type of lens [...] conflict among competing interests is a basic, animating force of any society.[25] Functionalism is a very general idea that can be implemented in different ways.

The essence of functional analysis is that of the part-whole relationship, with the nature of the part being understood in terms of its contribution to the whole. Thus, in anatomy, one understands the nature of lungs, heart, intestine, and other organs in terms of their respective contributions—through processing and distributing the nutrients that other organs need, for example—to the well-being of the whole body. In other words, understanding what these parts are requires us to understand their place and their role within a larger entity.[26] The debate over functionalism was an early and necessary stage in sociology's development. It represented a coming of theoretical age and a new self-consciousness about sociology's identity as a discipline. Since then, there is both good

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[24] W. W. Sharrock, J. A. Hughes, and Peter J. Martin, *Understanding Modern Sociology* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 15-58, http://site.ebrary.com/id/10256911.

[25] Jeff Manza, Michael Sauder, and Nathan Wright, "Producing Textbook Sociology," *European Journal of Sociology* 51 (2010): 271-304, doi:10.1017/S0003975610000135.

[26] Sharrock, Hughes, and Martin, *Understanding Modern Sociology,* 15-58.

and bad news. The good news is that we have left that confrontation behind, though some of its issues continue to echo within current disputes over structure versus culture, micro versus macro, and ideology versus methodology.

The bad news is that we have also abandoned the forum for such confrontations. More and more, our current disagreements are shunted to the specialized sidelines. To cite once again the ironically reversed cliche from the greatest of all functionalists, Emile Durkheim: sociology has become a whole less than the sum of its parts.[27] It is interesting to observe that no one writes articles about how functionalism corrects the excesses of conflict theory. This demonstrates the extent to which functionalism is still the dominant perspective and conflict only the challenger. Adams' approach is indeed novel. He begins by rejecting the "tacit assumption" that functionalism is synonymous with the consensus theory of social integration and that dialectics are equitable with coercion theory. Adams argues that dialecticians make certain assumptions which are not common to coercion theory in general; hence, the dialectic approach is a species of coercion theory.

He also says that modern functionalism (after Merton, 1948) is not the opposite of conflict or dialectical theory. A functional approach does not specify a particular genus of theory; a society may exist by means of mutual cooperation or by coercion of some by others.[28] Clinical sociology brings the sociological perspective to intervention and action for change. The clinical sociologist is essentially a change agent rather than a researcher or evaluator. Clients may be individuals, groups, or organizations. The clinical task may

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[27] N. J. Demerath, "Who Now Debates Functionalism? From 'System, Change, and Conflict' to 'Culture, Choice, and Praxis,'" *Sociological Forum Official Journal of the Eastern Sociological Society* 11, no. 2 (1996): 333–345, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02408371.

[28] Burt Adams, "Coercion and Consensus Theories: Some Unresolved Issues," *American Journal of Sociology* 71 (1966): 714-71.

involve, for example, a re-definition of the self, role, or situation. Clinical sociology uses a variety of techniques or methods for facilitating change. The field value orientation is humanistic, holistic, and multidisciplinary. A clinical sociologist functions as a social therapist, whose clients are individuals seen as part of some social system. Relationships and social structure become the focus of scrutiny and the locus of change.

Individuals as clients are seen sociologically in a group context as engaged in social interaction with others. Relationships, social roles, definitions of self, others, and reality, and the consequences of these for behavior are of central concern to the sociologically oriented clinician.[29] When we want to use a noun to refer to this activity, we can call it "the process of applying sociology." Ideally, therefore, all the graduate programs in this area should be labeled something like "Program in Applying Sociology" and SAS should alter its name to Society for Applying Sociology, although this terminological clarification is not critical. Second, this activity of applying sociology constitutes a vital link between sociological scholarship and sociological practice, incorporating portions of both those realms of sociology but not totally overlapping with either one. Because of the "dynamic" (resurrecting Ward's original term) nature of the process of applying sociology, its partial overlaps with both sociological scholarship and sociological practice pose no serious conceptual problems.

Indeed, those overlaps give the process its identity. Expressed more formally, I propose that we conceptualize "applied sociology" as the process of applying sociological knowledge and techniques to understanding and dealing with social issues

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[29] R. A. Straus, "Introduction: The Reemergence of Clinical Sociology," *American Behavioral Scientist* 22, no. 4 (1979): 477-485, https://doi.org/10.1177/000276427902200401.

and problems.[30] The sociology of service provides a way to think about social problems, in today's service culture, that create opportunities for us all, sociologists, and non-sociologists, to play active roles in their solutions. Dedicated to the welfare of people in community, service sociology allows sociologists to put their special skills, acumen, and intellectual vigor in realizing a more just, equitable and robust community. In short, service sociology is a socially responsible and mission, oriented, sociology of action and alleviation. The sociology of service has its heritage in the progressive era reform of the three early American sociologies of the social gospel, settlement, sociology, and charity, sociology, as well as in the three contemporary neo, progressive, sociologies of humanist, liberation, sociology, communitarianism, and public sociology.[31]

At the turn of the twentieth century, American sociology basically took two forms: sociological theory, and the practice of ameliorative reform and service. At that time, sociology as philanthropy was the prevailing conception among the general public. However, by the 1920s, as sociology became more professionalized, it became less politically engaged and activist.[32] Today's students are likely to express their lofty political and social impulses and practical desires to change the world through community service, even if in limited or modest ways. They tutor the young, keep company with the elderly, visit the sick, run summer camps, design and implement educational programs in prisons, help the medically needy and indigent get hospital care,

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[30] Marvin E. Olsen, "The Process of Applying Sociology," *Journal of Applied Sociology* 4 (1987): 1–12, JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43481294.

[31] A. Javier Treviño, "The Challenge of Service Sociology," *Social Problems* 59, no. 1 (2012): 2-20.

[32] Lester F. Ward, "Contemporary Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology* 7, no. 4 (1902): 475-500.

and argue in the Quartz on behalf of tenants or workers. Often those students experience the same conflicts or misgivings that deeply troubled the activists of the civil rights era and that now trouble older people working full time as community organizers.[33]

Next, because service sociology should always regard community stakeholders as capable, resourceful, and effectual, it orients the service sociologist to put facilitating actions in proper perspective: as a way of helping stakeholders to solve the problem, rather than seeing it as your job to help the service sociologist solve the social problem. Service sociologist, also allow recipient partners, stakeholders, and other citizens to decide together what problems they think are particularly important to their community. It also allows them to identify which facilitating actions they can take and which strategies they can support that make a difference while empowering people in need.[34] Most of the systematic comparative study of administrative structure has been done by sociologists from sociological perspectives. Little political content can be found there. This is not meant as a criticism. It simply underscores the need for similar work in political science. Administration is not only politics in its most serious form, it is also the most quantifiable form.[35]

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[33] Robert Coles, *The Call of Service: A Witness to Idealism* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 40.

[34] John F. Galliher, "What They Said and What They Did: Some Early SSSP Presidents," *Social Problems* 49, no. 1 (2002): 1-10.

[35] Roger G. Noll, *Regulatory Policy and the Social Sciences* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2021): 76, https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/PublicFullRecord.aspx?p=30495330.

Conclusion

U.S. sociology is no exception to the salience of national sociology, although it has been most guilty of claiming universality for what is a quite peculiar society. Beginning with its theological roots in the nineteenth century it became institutionalized with the so-called Chicago School and in other universities, such as Columbia. Subsequently, after the Second World War it became consolidated around structural functionalism and increasingly sophisticated quantitative research, only to be subsequently radicalized under the influence of social movements. Most recently, there has been a return to a more conservative vision with the resurrection of cultural and neo-institutional sociology. Like any national field of sociology, it is not beyond the influence of other national sociologies, especially European social theory. Structural functionalism was originally built on Parsons' interpretation of Weber, Durkheim, Pareto, and Marshall, while the Marxist countermovement drew on French structuralism, German critical theory, and English empiricism.[36]

While the boundary between sociology and philosophy remains porous and somewhat deferential, there is perhaps less unquestioned acceptance of philosophy's elevated status about the social sciences than in the 1970s. The direction of influence is still largely one-way traffic, and the tendency for sociologists to seek inspiration or new ideas from philosophical sources remains, but the epistemological hold over the discipline seems to have loosened. However, sociology's boundaries with the 'natural' sciences have become more blurred, with the rise of actor-network theory and the

[36] Michael Burawoy, "The Promise of Sociology: Global Challenges for National Disciplines," *Sociology* 50, no. 5 (2016): 949–959, JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26556376.

extension of 'the social' to material things. Science and technology studies have blurred borders between social and natural, or between society and nature.[37] The task of sociology is to be engaged with the issues of democracy. When you pose it that way, you do get the question that Howard Becker posed: Whose side are we on? It is not that sociology must be partisan, but that sociology cannot separate itself from the issue of partisanship as such, so it had better understand the process of the production and reproduction of knowledge, its relation to issues of democracy and hierarchy.[38] Sociological research should become more actively engaged in understanding the dynamic linkage between technology, environment, populations, level of affluence, political regime characteristics, and human rights around the globe in an attempt to positively influence social change in the twenty-first century.[39]

[37] Rana Jawad, Paddy Dolan, and Tracey Skillington, "Sociology in the Twenty-First Century: Reminiscence and Redefinition," *Sociology* 51, no. 4 (2017): 904–914, JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26558662.

[38] Nasar Meer and John Holmwood, "John Holmwood: Sociology of Structure, Sociology As Structure," *Sociology* 50, no. 5 (2016): 1002–1011, JSTOR, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26556382.

[39] David L. Brunsma, et al, *Handbook of Sociology and Human Rights* (New York, NY: Taylor and Francis Group, 2013), ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/dtl/detail.action?docID=3384521.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

The context of this project was the Emanuel Baptist Church, located in the Jamaica Square section of Elmont, New York. The problem present in the context was that the Emanuel Baptist Church had failed to assist the surrounding community with addressing the issues/problems/brokenness by which it was confronted. Ministry leaders of the Emanuel Baptist Church participated in an outreach training seminar, which equipped leadership to minister to its members to minister to the surrounding community. The duration of this project was six weeks. The purpose of this project was to illustrate the importance of the church addressing the physical needs as well as the spiritual needs of the congregants and surrounding communities. My ministry interests and my skills related to the needs of my contacts in many ways. My ministry interests are based on addressing the spiritual and physical needs of all those that are served within my context. As ministers of the gospel, and even as people of God, it's important for us to have a pulse on prevalent services and programs being administered by our government and how to access those programs and services to benefit our people.

Ministry doesn't only involve preaching. I learned that ministry is the action of serving God and others; ministry is the act of going out into the world and doing what is necessary to help others; ministry is the way that we show our love for God and others.

What I find the most compelling about ministry is that ministry is all about loving other people. It's about putting yourself out and taking the time, trouble and hassle of getting involved in someone else's life. It's about being concerned about the physical and spiritual wellbeing of someone other than yourself. As a bi-vocational Minister, I work as a public servant in Nassau County Government, as well as in the Town of Hempstead Government in addition to being a minister of the Gospel. Working within county government has provided me with access to programs and services that are beneficial to the residents surrounding the church where I serve, as well as congregants who may be in need. These roles are quite instrumental when it comes to addressing the spiritual and physical needs of those within my context. The Biblical Foundations Chapter provides a general overview of the second chapter of the epistle of James, the fifteenth through the seventeenth verses, as well as a detailed exegesis of the verses of this pericope on which is the biblical text on which my project has been formulated.

As we continue to see rapid changes in governmental structures, community-based agencies, as well as how churches operate within our communities, there is a necessitated need for churches to fill in the gaps and spaces of functionality within the community to demonstrate the goodness of God through Jesus Christ. This pericope speaks to the very core of our Christendom with regard to how we should be exemplifying the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world at large. There is a necessitated need for churches to fill in the gaps and spaces of functionality within the community to demonstrate the goodness of God through Jesus Christ. Social gospel emphasized how Jesus could remedy the problems caused by "Gilded Age" capitalism, even though it was not exclusive to Protestant churches. The Social Gospel Movement leaders took Jesus'

message “love thy neighbor” into pulpits, published books and lectured across the country. Other leaders, mostly women, ran settlement houses designed to alleviate the sufferings of immigrants living in cities like Boston, Massachusetts, New York, and Chicago, Illinois.

As leaders like Walter Rauschenbusch strove to articulate their theological understanding of what by the early 1910s was being called the “social gospel,” they were fundamentally transforming the way many Americans were viewing the relationship between religion and social reform. Sociological research should become more actively engaged in understanding the dynamic linkage between technology, environment, populations, level of affluence, political regime characteristics, and human rights around the globe in an attempt to positively influence social change. At the personal level, sociology investigates the social causes and consequences of such things as romantic love, racial and gender identity, family conflict, deviant behavior, aging, and religious faith. At the societal level, sociology examines and explains matters like crime and law, poverty and wealth, prejudice and discrimination, schools and education, business firms, urban community, and social movements. In conjunction with all of the research and work completed over the past four semesters, supervisory staff and leadership of the Nassau County Department of Social Services will provide training on its programs and services for Deacons, Trustees, and Auxiliary leaders, and all leadership of the Emanuel Baptist Church of Elmont. administers many social service programs established and funded at the federal, state, and local government levels.

Methodology

The data gathering methods that were used for this project were pre-project and post project training questionnaires. Pre-project training questionnaires were distributed to church leadership at the outset of the training, while post-project questionnaires were distributed at the completion of the training. The pre and post project training questionnaires were formulated by using a conglomerate of questions often asked by congregants and members of the community as it pertained to seeking out assistance for their needs, and the issues that they were facing. Both the pre-project and post-project contained the same number of questions on each questionnaire, and each question on both questionnaires were the same. The pre-project questionnaires were distributed to participants for completion without any prior knowledge of what the questionnaires entailed or any direction or instruction on how the questions should be answered. The post-project questionnaires were distributed to participants immediately following the final session. There was also a final interview conducted with one of the participants after the closing of the training seminar.

The interview was conducted separately after all sessions of the seminar had been completed. The subject who was interviewed was a member of the Emanuel church who works in New York City as a counselor in New York City's School System. Through personal requests from myself, the participants for this project were chosen because they were the leaders and direction-shapers of the church. Because, oftentimes, congregants will speak with church leaders and church auxiliary leaders before they have an opportunity to address their issues with the pastor, church leaders and church auxiliary leaders were the ideal participants for this particular study. Although these particular

church leaders were chosen as participants for the study, this study has no expiration date or shelf life. As church leaders may age out of their positions of leadership in the church, and as new leadership may take its position in the church, the same impact will take place for whoever takes the position of church leadership at the Emanuel church, as it pertains to this study. The supervisory staff from the Department of Social Services and Human Services participated based on a request from me. I served in the department of Social Services for nearly fifteen years as a part of the Commissioners office. Having a grasp of the various program areas of the department, the presenters were specifically chosen to speak to their areas of professional expertise. The recipients of the questionnaires were church officers and church leaders who participated in the project.

Due to the nature of the project itself, focusing on church leaders and church officers, church officers were chosen directly and in person for their participation in this project. Local government officials who participated in presenting information were also approached directly, as they were colleagues in local government who held a certain great deal of expertise in their area. An attempt to affect change in the participants, Sermons were conducted from the outset of the project as well as the completion of the project that were formulated using the biblical foundation for this project. The sermon was based on my biblical foundation scripture for this project bound in James 2:14-17, where it says, "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." The premise of the sermons was to exegete from James' epistle the importance of not only

addressing the spiritual needs of our fellow man, but to also be able to address the spiritual needs of our fellow man.

I also cross-referenced the words of Christ found in Matthew 25:31-40 where it says, “for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.” “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’” It was imperative for participants to have an understanding that as much as we do the work of the Lord behind the walls of the church, it was just as important to be able to do the work of the Lord outside the walls of the church as well. It was important for participants to understand the importance of partnership between government resources and the church, particularly in communities of color.

It was also imperative for participants to understand that for us as believers, we can't just have a faith that's only spoken by word, but we need to have a faith that we can demonstrate by deed; By doing what Christ asked us to do in feeding our brothers and sisters, and clothing our brothers and sisters, ensuring that our brothers and sisters have the necessary resources they need to survive in today's world. Church officers and leaders, as well as government officials were also observed in their interactions with each other as information was disseminated; how the information was absorbed by church leaders and church officers, and how government officials delivered information to

church officers and church leaders as well. Another part of the purpose of having governmental representatives speak to the programs that are being offered by local government with regard to financial assistance was that oftentimes, when people within our church congregation, or from the surrounding communities are looking for help, they're uncertain as to what they're looking for to address their needs, and they're uncertain as to what programs are available for them. These specific representatives who were selected to present spoke to specific needs and provided definition of what is available to those within the congregation, and those from the surrounding communities.

Implementation

The location of the project took place within the context at the Emanuel Baptist Church of Elmont, New York. There were seven total participants in this project which consisted of church leadership and church auxiliary leadership from the Emanuel Baptist Church of Elmont. The church leaders who participated in the study have been members of the Emanuel church for more than twenty years each. Over the duration of those twenty years, church leaders have seen shifts in demographics, shifting community dynamics, then shifts in population of the community all which had a direct effect on the population being served by the church.

Each leader was extremely acclimated with the membership of the Emanuel church, as well as the surrounding community of the Emanuel church. With that acclamation, the participants were able to provide extremely detailed data and information pertaining to the needs of the congregants, as well as the needs of the surrounding community. Also included within the knowledge of community and

congregational dynamics was insight into generational dynamics of families who have been a part of membership of the Emanuel Church through the years. Among the participants, their education level was made up of high school graduates, three college level participants, and one participant who served in the military. The Deacon Board at the Emanuel Church is made up of eight deacons in total.

There were two members of the Deacon Board from the Church who were represented in the project. The two members representing the deacon board were male, ages sixty-seven and sixty-three. The Trustee Board at the Emanuel Church is made up seven trustees in total. There were two members of the Trustee Board from the church who were represented in the project. The two members representing the Trustee Board were male, ages seventy-four and sixty-five. There were three Auxiliary leaders from the church who were represented in the project. The three members representing the Auxiliary Leaders were female, ages seventy-eight, fifty-nine, and twenty-three.

There was one professional associate involved in this research project, Dr. Lisa Newland, PhD. Dr. Newland is a NYS Licensed Clinical Social Worker, as well as the sole proprietor of Educate 2 Elevate Consultation Services. The company is a NYS Certified Minority/Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) which provides a range of clinical and consultation services, making use of Dr. Newland's strengths as a clinician, trainer and administrator. Dr. Newland is also currently a full professor and chairperson of the Department of Social Work at Molloy University in Long Island, New York, where she served as faculty president from 2018-2020. Dr. Newland did not conduct any teaching, nor did she distribute any materials pertaining to the study. Dr. Newland was highly instrumental in this study in her willingness to provide counseling

services for any participant who may have been compelled or felt the need to have professional counseling as a result of this study.

There was one Context Associate involved with this research project, Rev. Dr. William E. Thomas, Pastor of the St. John's Baptist Church of Lakeview, New York. Dr. Thomas has been the Pastor of the St. John's Baptist Church of Lakeview for the past thirty-eight years of the church's 100-year history. Dr. Thomas earned his Doctoral degree from the New York Theological Seminary. Pastor Thomas is the President of the Baptist Ministers Coalition of Hempstead and Vicinity and is highly instrumental in the Long Island Council of Clergy on Long Island in New York. Prior to becoming a pastor, Dr. Thomas is also a retired sergeant of the New York Police Department, which speaks directly to his experience in Community Affairs. For the purposes of this study, in his capacity as a senior pastor, Dr. Thomas provided insight to spiritual matters and was a wealth of knowledge and information from a pastoral perspective. Dr. Thomas did not directly teach or lead any part of the study, nor did he distribute any information pertaining to the study.

In preaching the initial sermonette to the participants, my exegesis of the scripture was to use the writing of James 2:14-17, where it says, "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." The Holy Spirit led me to this scripture to show that the behavior of anyone and what they do is a direct sign or demonstration of—their faith. If a person is saying that they have faith in God, or a belief

in God, but it doesn't lead them to take any actions according to their faith, then their faith is dead. James showed us here in this text that it makes no sense to wish someone well, to extend greetings of hoping that someone be blessed, but you see them struggling, and you see them in a state of poverty or struggle, and you do nothing to assist that person through their difficulties, especially when you have access to resources. That was the initial basis of my argument from the outset.

As churches that are planted within communities where the people are struggling, and where the people are having difficulties, the church has to take on a role where they're not only providing spiritual guidance, and spiritual assistance, but they also have to take on a role where they're putting the Gospel into action within the congregation and the community. As church leaders, as those who are assigned to assist the pastor of the church, there should be a level of understanding and knowledge of what's available to congregants and to the surrounding community as it pertains to available programs and services and resources that can directly address the physical needs. It should be our responsibility as people of God to see after our brothers and sisters in that manner. Similarly, that's why James is informing us of the importance of not only having a mindset that thinks on the things of God, but to have a mindset that does the things of God. If what a person believes about God does not lead them to act in the ways of God, then their "faith" is not saving faith. It is merely opinion. James never says that faith is not essential for salvation. He never claims works are required to obtain or keep salvation. He is, however, crystal clear that truly saving faith cannot be separated from the evidence of good works.

For the sermonette that was preached at the outset of the training, I exegeted from the scripture in the Gospel of Matthew 25:35-40 where it says, “for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.” “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”

This scripture was exegeted for the final sermonette at the close of instruction. This scripture was used because it acts as a cross reference to my biblical foundation which was found in the book of James. What was expressed through this scripture for this sermonette was the importance of seeing Christ in all those who we're supposed to help. The scripture lays it out. we should view our fellow man, and how we should treat our fellow man, through a lens made-up of Jesus Christ. Everything which is done to a follower of Christ, whether it be good or evil, he considers as done to himself. When we see strangers, our fellow brothers and sisters on the verge of destitution; to the extent that it could be soul shattering for them, it is our responsibility as followers of Christ, to do what we can by the grace of God to help meet their needs. That can be inclusive of providing aid to a poor family, seeking housing and seeking food assistance, who are aided by individuals who are being used by God to be of assistance. This sermonette to close out the training was to let them know that God wants to use them not only to meet the spiritual needs of our brothers and sisters, but to also meet the physical needs of our

brothers and sisters. I chose teaching sermonettes from the outset and at the close of the training to create what I would call, for lack of a better term, “a spiritual sandwich” where the sermons would act as spiritual bread for the physical information to be received.

Supervisory staff and leadership of the Nassau County Department of Social Services will provide training on its programs and services for these workshops. These workshop leaders consist of D’andra Allen, Social Welfare Examiner Supervisor of Temporary Assistance for the Nassau County Department of Social Services. Darrian Strong, Director of Child Support Collections and Enforcement for the Nassau County Department of Social Services. Donna Worsley-Hines, Social Welfare Examiner and Assistant Supervisor of the Daycare and Employment Unit for the Nassau County Department of Social Services. Monique Davis, Social Welfare Examiner Supervisor of Medicaid Administration for the Nassau County Department of Social Services, and Linval Cunningham, Supervisor for Child Protective Services for the Nassau County Department of Social services.

The Nassau County Department of Social Services administers many social service programs established and funded at the federal, state, and local government levels. Such programs and services include:

Adoption: Casework counseling, referral, and concrete services are provided directly to children freed for adoption and their foster and/or adoptive families until adoptions are legalized. This unit effects adoption subsidies where appropriate and prepares the documentation required for the legalization process. Direct and referral services are provided to match children with adoptive families in cases where the foster

family is not adopting, to maintain the Prospective Adoptive Parent's Registry, to register freed children with the NYSAS Adoption Registry and with Children Awaiting Parents (CAP) Book, to administer the Subsidized Adoption Program, to respond to the Adoption Information Registry, and to handle post-legalization issues.

Adoption Subsidy: Direct and referral services are provided to match children with adoptive families in cases where the foster family is not adopting, to maintain the Prospective Adoptive Parent's Registry; to register freed children with the NYSAS Adoption Registry and with Children Awaiting Parents (CAP) Book, to administer the Subsidized Adoption Program, to respond to the Adoption Information Registry, and to handle post-legalization issues.

Adult Services: Adult Protective Services accepts all referrals of adults, over the age of 18 years, who are alleged to be incapable of caring for themselves because of a physical or mental incapacity and/or are abused, neglected, or financially exploited by others; and have no one willing or able to assist them responsibly.

AIDS Services: The AIDS services coordinator is responsible for ensuring that people who have been diagnosed as being HIV or having AIDS receive all the services and benefits for which they are entitled from the Department of Social Services and the many public and private helping agencies.

The Department has a dedicated HIV/AIDS caseworker who assists visitors. For individuals who come to the building, the caseworker meets face to face and offers services available both at DSS and in the community.

Child Protective Services: Child Protective Services is responsible for investigating all allegations of Child Abuse and Neglect received by the Department from

the New York Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment, part of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. Child Support Enforcement: Child support services are available to any parent, guardian, or caretaker of a child for whom child support is needed. If you are applying for Public Assistance, or Medicaid, filing for child support from the non-custodial parents is part of the application process. If you are an applicant for, or a recipient of Public Assistance for a child, child support services are automatically provided unless seeking child support may result in physical or emotional harm to you or your child.

Day Care: Childcare is provided not only to those on Temporary Assistance, but also to those working families who meet income guidelines for subsidies.

Domestic Violence: Under this option the Nassau County Department of Social Services has developed a safe, secure interviewing area for those applicants or recipients of temporary assistance who are victims of this insidious crime.

Emergency Services: The emergency services program offers the following services: Domestic violence referrals, Emergency fuel referrals, Referrals for suspected child abuse, Referrals to appropriate community agencies, if warranted, Referrals to emergency temporary housing, several of these program components have eligibility guidelines.

Employment for Temporary Assistance Clients: As a result of Federal and State welfare reform legislation, TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) and Safety Net (those without minor dependent child(ren) in the household) customers are required to actively search for work, show proof of their job search efforts, accept a job when it is offered, or participate in work activity assignment.

The Nassau County Department of Social Services offers a variety of assistance programs to help customers achieve self-sufficiency.

Home Energy Assistance Program: Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) is a federally funded program designed to help low-income households meet the high cost of home energy. Both those who pay separately for heating costs and households whose heat is included in their rent may be eligible for a one-time regular benefit. Additionally, households with a heating emergency may also be eligible for an emergency benefit and and/or a Heating Equipment Repair/Replacement (HERR) benefit. The HEAP year generally begins in mid-November and closes in mid-March or when the program funding is exhausted.

Housing and Homeless Prevention: Shelter placements and assistance with emergency housing needs are provided at the Department of Social Services (DSS) under the auspices of the Nassau County Office of Housing and Community Development (OHCD). Eligible individuals and families can, on an emergency, temporary basis be assisted with shelter and other items of need in order to meet their emergency. The goal is to provide families and individuals with the tools they need to secure a permanent, stable housing, and move as quickly as possible to a stable self-sufficient role in the community.

Medicaid: Medicaid provides assistance to people who do not have the means to pay for medical care. People who are eligible include people in receipt of Supplemental Security Income (SSI), public assistance, SNAP and those that meet the eligibility criteria.

Medicaid Managed Care: Managed Care is a comprehensive health care program which integrates the services of doctors, hospitals, and health care specialists into a health

plan network whose goal is to manage the health care of its enrollees. Under managed care, Medicaid beneficiaries are entitled to the same benefits as fee-for-service Medicaid but receive them through their managed care plan.

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program): The SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) helps low-income households by supplementing their monthly food budget. Eligible households use an electronic benefit card and PIN (personal ID number) to access their benefits at the supermarket checkout counter, the same way a debit card is used. There are many supermarkets throughout the county where recipients can use their benefit card.

Temporary Assistance: Temporary Assistance (TA), also known as Public Assistance (PA), is temporary help for needy adults, and children. If you are unable to work, can't find a job, or your job does not pay enough, TA may be able to help you pay for your expenses. The two primary Temporary Assistance programs are Family Assistance, which provides cash assistance to eligible needy families that include a minor child living with parent/parents or a caretaker relative, and Safety Net Assistance, which provides cash assistance to eligible needy individuals and families who are not eligible for FA. These programs provide the same level of assistance to a household but serve different populations and have some different rules.

Emanuel Baptist Church of Elmont Leadership Training

Week 1

15 Mins-Distribution, Completion, and Collection of Pre-Questionnaires

30 Mins-Biblical and Theological Presentation Basis for the Project

30 Mins-Programmatic overview of Temporary Assistance/Employment Overview and Recap

Participants became acclimated with programs and services available to congregants and residents. The sermonette was preached to provide a spiritual overview of the importance of this project.

Week 2

30 Mins-Service overview of Child Support Enforcement

30 Mins-Service overview of the Child Protective Services and Adult Protective Services/Recap and Dismissal

Through the presentations, participants because familiarized with Child Support Services and Child Protective Services both of which are administered through the Nassau County Department of Social Services.

Week 3

30 Mins-Service overview of Foster Care Services

30 Mins-Service overview of Adoption Services

30 Mins-Overview of Foster Care/Adoption Application Process

30 Mins-Recap of presentation/Dismissal

Through the presentations, participants because familiarized with Foster Care Services and Adoption Services both of which are administered through the Nassau County Department of Social Services.

Week 4

30 Mins-Programmatic overview of the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

30 Mins-Programmatic overview of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Dismissal

Through the presentations, participants because familiarized with Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) both of which are administered through the Nassau County Department of Social Services.

Week 5

30 Mins-Overview of the Day Care program

30 Mins-Overview of the Employment/Recap and Dismissal

Through the presentations, participants because familiarized with Day Care Program and Employment Services both of which are administered through the Nassau County Department of Social Services.

Week 6

30 Mins-Programmatic overview of the Medicaid program and Medicaid Managed Care program

30 Mins-Biblical and Theological Presentation Conclusion for the Project

15 Mins-Distribution, Completion, and Collection of Pre-Questionnaires/Dismissal

Through the final presentations and sermonette, participants because familiarized with Medicaid and Medicaid Managed Care both of which are administered through the Nassau County Department of Social Services. The sermonette was preached to provide final spiritual insight into the purpose of this project.

Summary of Learning

From the outset of this study, there was a great deal of misinformation concerning human and social services programs and benefits. One of the greatest difficulties faced this study was not only educating participants on what programs and services were available to congregants and the surrounding communities, but how to access these programs and services as well. Congregants and surrounding community members who would find themselves in need of physical help oftentimes weren't aware of what assistance there was for which they were eligible. And certain communities, there was also a resistance on the part of the church to partner with governmental agencies who administer programs and services Due to lack of trust on the part of the congregants, and certainly a lack of trust on the part of surrounding community members. Houses of faith are the ideal locations to bridge the gap between congregants, rounding community members, and the programs and services that governmental agencies provide.

So, through the rigors of this study as well as through the data that was collected from this study, participants learned the importance of the church's role in ensuring that not only the spiritual needs of its congregants and surrounding community are met, but also the physical needs of the congregants and surrounding communities are met as well. Participants in this study learned that assisting those who are in need can be considered

ministry. Participants also learned that needs are not only defined by spiritual matters, but there can also be defined as physical matters as well. Participants in this study learned the definition of human and social service benefits according to government officials, and governmental programmatic definitions. Participants in this study also learned who is eligible for governmental programs that will assist congregants and surrounding community in times of need. In addition to learning about eligibility requirements for governmental services and programs, participants also learned about the processes in receiving governmental programs and services. Participants also learned about the impact that human and social services programs can have on congregants and the surrounding community.

Presentation of Data Table

For the purposes of this study, the pre-project questionnaire and the post-project questionnaire questions were exactly the same. The questions were formulated to produce yes or no answers, but we're reconfigured the questions for purposes of discussion during the time of study. The questions were as follows:

Pre-Project Questions and Questionnaire Responses

- Can assisting those need be considered ministry?
- Are you familiar with human and social service benefits?
- Are there “certain people” that receive human and social services benefits?
- Can anyone receive human and social services benefits?
- Are you familiar with how to acquire these benefits?

- Do human and social service benefits impact the local church, community, and body of Christ as a whole?

The tables below reflect the answers of the participants.

Name	Question 1	Question 2
Participant 1	YES	YES
Participant 2	YES	YES
Participant 3	YES	YES
Participant 4	YES	YES
Participant 5	YES	YES
Participant 6	YES	YES
Participant 7	YES	YES

Name	Question 3	Question 4
Participant 1	YES	YES
Participant 2	YES	YES
Participant 3	YES	YES
Participant 4	YES	NO
Participant 5	YES	NO
Participant 6	YES	YES
Participant 7	YES	YES

Name	Question 5	Question 6
Participant 1	YES	YES
Participant 2	YES	YES
Participant 3	YES	YES
Participant 4	YES	YES
Participant 5	YES	YES
Participant 6	YES	YES
Participant 7	YES	YES

Post-Project Questions and Questionnaire Responses

- Can assisting those need be considered ministry?
- Are you familiar with human and social service benefits?
- Are there "certain people" that receive human and social services benefits?
- Can anyone receive human and social services benefits?
- Are you familiar with how to acquire these benefits?
- Do human and social service benefits impact the local church, community, and body of Christ as a whole?

The tables below reflect the answers of the participants.

Post-Project Questionnaire Responses

Name	Question 1	Question 2
Participant 1	YES	YES
Participant 2	YES	YES

Participant 3	YES	YES
Participant 4	YES	YES
Participant 5	YES	YES
Participant 6	YES	YES
Participant 7	YES	YES

Name	Question 3	Question 4
Participant 1	YES	YES
Participant 2	YES	YES
Participant 3	YES	YES
Participant 4	YES	NO
Participant 5	YES	NO
Participant 6	YES	YES
Participant 7	YES	YES

Name	Question 5	Question 6
Participant 1	YES	YES
Participant 2	YES	YES
Participant 3	YES	YES
Participant 4	YES	YES

Participant 5	YES	YES
Participant 6	YES	YES
Participant 7	YES	YES

Analysis of the Data

- Can assisting those need be considered ministry?
- Are you familiar with human and social service benefits?
- Are there "certain people" that receive human and social services benefits?
- Can anyone receive human and social services benefits?
- Are you familiar with how to acquire these benefits?
- Do human and social service benefits impact the local church, community, and body of Christ as a whole?

Upon analyzing the data, there was a consensus general understanding of the services and programs provided by the Nassau County Department of Social Services. Part of this analysis was to analyze the answers to the pre and post project questions individually. When asked "Can assisting those in need be considered ministry" there was an overwhelming agreement amongst the leaders that assisting those in need can be considered ministry. Part of that agreement was highlighted in the fact that the participants never looked at assisting those in need any other way but ministry. This was concluded in pre-project questioning and post-project questioning as well. When asked "what are Human and Social Service benefits" there was a general understanding of what these benefits were, but there was a great deal of not fully understanding the specificity of income guidelines or purpose of each program. For leaders to not fully understand the

specificity of income guidelines or the purpose of each program is not far-fetched as these services and programs can be very intricate in their income guidelines and regulations. However, at the close of the presentation given by the governmental representatives, there was a clearer understanding of what these benefits were and their purpose.

When asked "are the 'certain people' who receive human and social service benefits" there was a consensus agreement fused with a bit of hesitancy and apprehension of not wanting to display any preconceived bias or stereotypes on who receives benefits. The participants arrived at greater clarity upon the conclusion of the presentations on the services and benefits. When asked "are you familiar with how to acquire these benefits" there was a split with regards to some knowing where to go to apply for benefits and some not knowing where to go to apply for benefits. Upon the conclusion of the presentation on services and benefits, there was greater clarity of the participants on understanding where to go to apply for services and benefits, and where to direct others to go to apply for services and benefits. When asked "Do human and social service benefits impact the local church, community, and body of Christ as a whole" there was a consensus agreement amongst the participants that human and social service programs impact the local church, community, and the body of Christ as a whole.

Part of that consensus amongst the leaders were the concerns of how many saints suffer in silence out of fear of having their business spread around the church. There was great concern amongst the participants with regards to how many Saints actually leave the on Sunday morning not having enough resources to keep their lights on, or an adequate amount of food in the refrigerator. Part of the consensus Amongst the leaders

from a community perspective is that the church doesn't serve anyone outside of the church walls. Although the church is housed ion the community, it doesn't serve the community in which it is housed, which is part of the premise of this study.

Upon further analyzing the data, what was found was at the outset of the presentations, church leaders and church auxiliary leaders or participants who were somewhat familiar with human and social services had a greater understanding of Human and Social Services at the conclusion of the presentations. It was found that participants as a whole and had a basic understanding of how assisting congregants and community members with their physical needs can be categorized as ministry. I can make a strong assessment in saying that the sermons at the outset which spoke to putting faith into action as well as the sermon at the closing of the presentation which dealt with Christ's words in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, putting the gospel into full action was highly instrumental in adjusting the mindsets of the participants. There wasn't a great deal of detailed knowledge on the parts of church leadership as it pertained to Human Service and programs. This was very understandable as human and social service programs and services can be very intricate and difficult to understand.

Income guidelines change; state and federal regulations are constantly being amended to the extent that it's hard to understand who's eligible for what. Again, the presentations from the social services and Human Services representatives were highly instrumental in giving a greater understanding of these programs and services to the participants. At the outset of the presentations, there was not a great deal of understanding of what role the church could play in addressing the physical needs of congregants and the surrounding community. amongst many of the participants, there

was a mindset of reluctance to deal with folks who weren't members or congregants of the Church of which we were all members, and which we served. There was a mindset or a posture of only seeing the need in addressing the spiritual needs of the congregants, and maybe the physical needs if necessary.

Although the ages amongst the participants were pretty much the same, the same mindset was shared as it pertained to the role of church leaders, and how those roles had impact on ministry. However, amongst the participants, there grew a greater understanding of what these benefits are and having a greater understanding that the role of church leaders, and the Church of auxiliary leaders extends beyond the walls of the church. At the close of the presentation, after all the questions have been analyzed and discussed, there was a great deal of optimism and hope amongst the participants as well. There seemed to be an enthusiastic spirit amongst the participants in seeking to take ministry beyond the walls of the church through addressing the needs of our congregants and seeking to address the needs of those in the surrounding community.

As I analyzed not only the responses to the questions of the questionnaires, but I also analyzed the spirits of those who participated and so a great optimism amongst the leadership period There was a greater understanding that we are to serve all people in the name of the Lord whether they are members of the church or not.

Conclusion

My dream for this ministry is for God to allow it to grow well beyond its walls. The interesting thing about that dream is that through this study, I've begun to see some of those very things come into place with regards to God allowing this ministry to grow

and go outside of its walls. The very fact that following the question-and-answer period and following the conversation. Amongst the participants, to see that there was an overwhelming agreement amongst the participants In understanding that assisting those in need can be considered ministry let's me know that we are well on our way. To see leadership coming to the understanding that seeking to assist those in need Shouldn't be viewed as anything other than ministry is heartening to say the least. To see the participants as church leaders take on a willingness to have a better understanding of what these benefits were, and how they can benefit congregants, and the surrounding community is certainly a dream realized.

Although I certainly understand the hesitancy and apprehension of not wanting to display any preconceived bias or stereotypes on who receives benefits, I was optimistic to see the concern over how many saints suffer in silence out of fear of having their business spread around the church. There was great concern amongst the participants with regards to how many saints actually leave on Sunday morning not having enough resources to keep their lights on, or an adequate amount of food in the refrigerator. Part of the consensus Amongst the leaders from a community perspective is that the church doesn't serve anyone outside of the church walls. Although the church is housed in the community, it doesn't serve the community in which it is housed, which is part of the premise of this study. My dream, and more importantly my prayer is that the church will head in a new direction of ministry.

I would certainly want to do this again at any church where there is a need to understand the importance of not only addressing spiritual needs but also addressing physical needs. I would want to do this again because theres a need for our churches to

get back to putting faith into action. There needs to be a greater understanding on the part of the church as a whole as it pertains to understanding of what role the church could play in addressing the physical needs of congregants and the surrounding community. As long as the church takes on a posture of only helping those within our walls, there will always be a need to do this again.

As long as there is a need for church leaders and church auxiliary leaders to have OK greater understanding that the role of church leaders, and the Church of auxiliary leaders extends beyond the walls of the church, there will always be a need for a study such as this.. At the close of the presentation, after all the questions have been analyzed and discussed, there was a great deal of optimism and hope amongst the participants as well. There seemed to be an enthusiastic spirit amongst the participants in seeking to take ministry beyond the walls of the church through addressing the needs of our congregants and seeking to address the needs of those in the surrounding community.

I certainly would like to have this published for the purposes of assisting churches, who are seeing the need to extend ministry beyond just addressing spiritual needs. Any church that's looking to take on a more progressive form of ministry, serving those outside of the walls of the church, addressing the physical needs of the congruence and the community, this would make a great manuscript for ministry, such as those who are looking to extend beyond the norm. Prayerfully it would be a great tool and a great resource for any church or any ministry who is looking to do just that, extend beyond, and really live by the words of Christ, feeding the Hungary clothing, the naked helping the destitute. That's where we really show our faith and the love of Christ as a church.

Yes, I would love to publish this as a manuscript for any ministry, looking to not only service congruence, but the surrounding community as well.

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